



“ The University Library is a living bank of ideas and a vigorous embodiment of the traditions of scholarship that have characterised the University since its earliest days. Here, Cambridge exhibits its deep roots in the past even as it renews itself intellectually in the present.



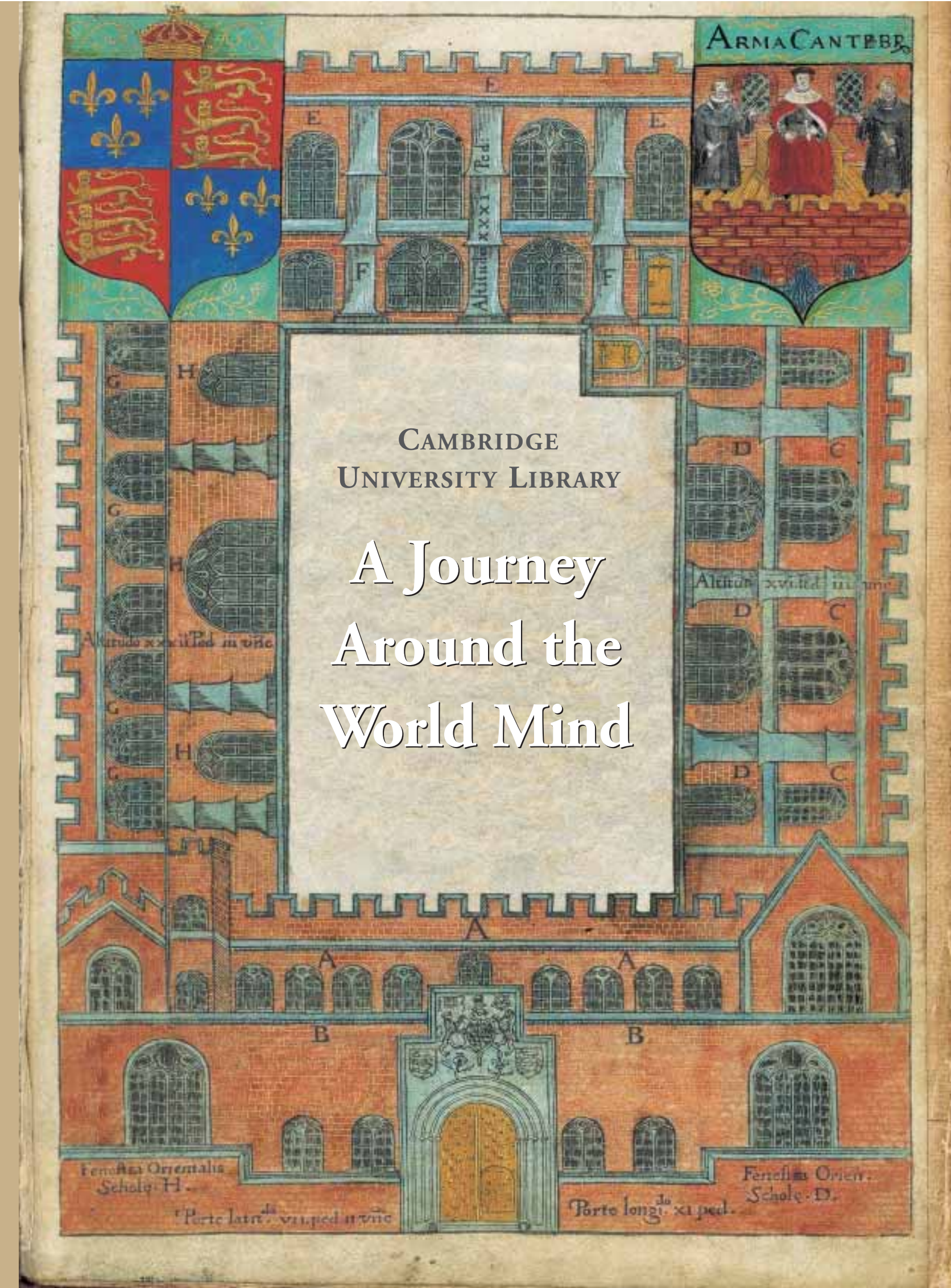
**Professor Alison Richard**  
Vice-Chancellor

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Pilgrim Trust • 1944 Franck Thomas Arnold, Trinity College • 1946 Robert Edward Hart, Pembroke College • 1947 Stanley Baldwin, first Earl Baldwin of Bewdley • 1952 Lionel Charles Hopkins • 1954 The Pilgrim Trust • 1955 C. K. Mill • 1955 Frank Ricardo, Trinity College • 1960 Maud, Viscountess Templewood • 1964 Francis Puryer White, Fellow of St John's College • 1964 Sir Harold Williams, Christ's College • 1968 Sir Allen Lane • 1975 Nora, Lady Barlow • 1978 John Patrick William Ehrman, Trinity College • 1980 Pamela, Lady Butterfield • 1988 The Andrew W Mellon Foundation • 1991 George Pember Darwin, Trinity College • 1991 Mitsui Marine and Fire Insurance Co Ltd • 1991 Timothy Moore, Trinity College • 1992 Dr Stefan Heym • 1995 Tadao Aoi • 1995 Dorothea Oschinsky • 1996 Norman Waddleton, Honorary Keeper of Illustrated Books • 1996 The Wellcome Trust • 1997 Heritage Lottery Fund • 1997 The Fund to Acquire the Royal Commonwealth Society Library for the Nation • 1998 Nancy, Dowager Countess of Enniskillen • 1998 Dr Gordon E Moore • 1998 Vickers plc • 1999 Heritage Lottery Fund • 2000 The Andrew W Mellon Foundation • 2000 Dr Mark Kaplanoff, Fellow of Pembroke College • 2001 The Andrew W Mellon Foundation • 2001 The Wellcome Trust • 2004 Dr Catherine Cooke, Clare Hall





Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's design for the East Elevation of the University Library



**Peter Fox**  
University Librarian

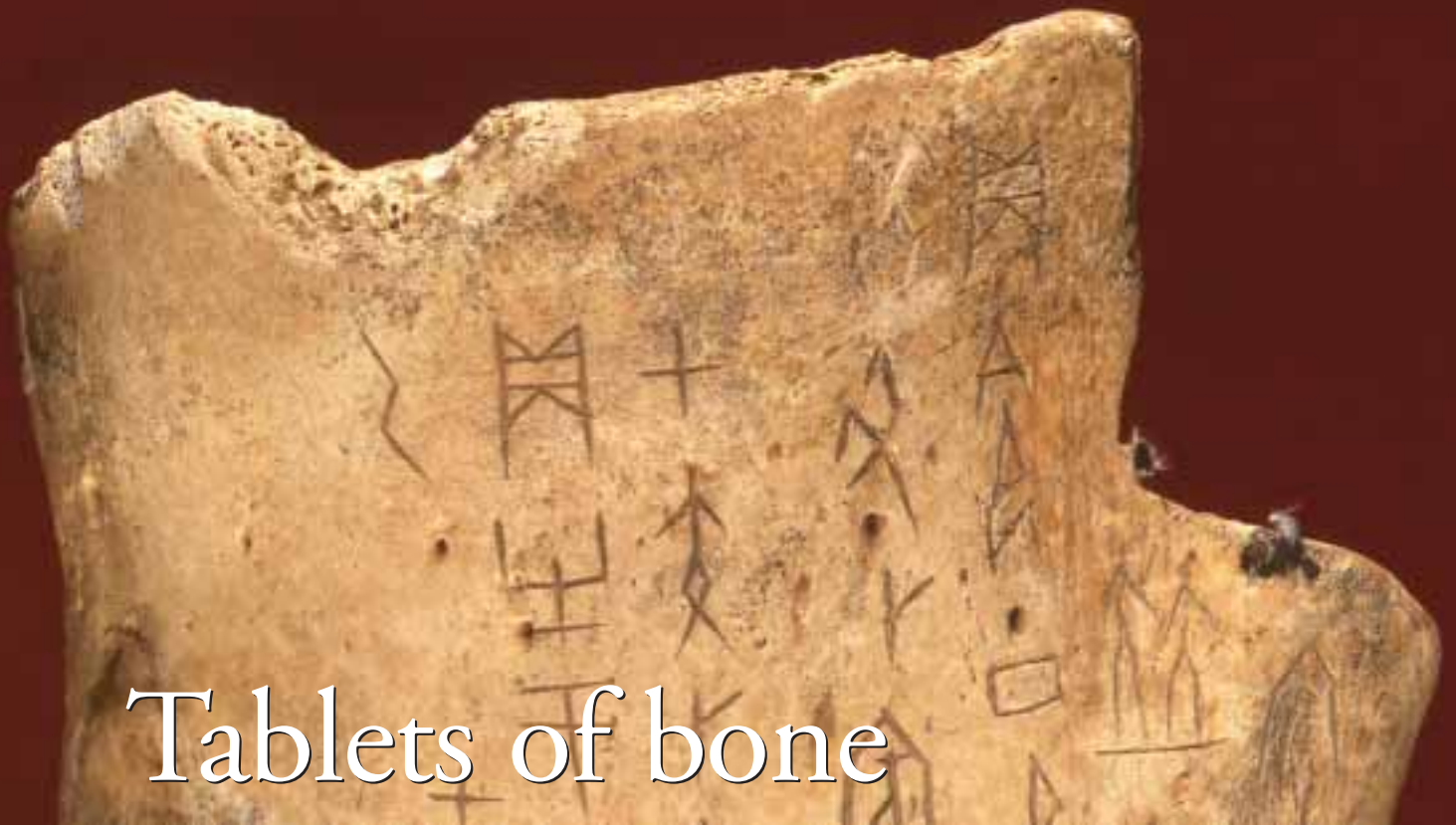
Browsing among the stacks of Cambridge University Library has been described as ‘walking around the world mind’ – this is one of the great libraries of the world. Our collections range in age from 3,000-year-old handwritten texts to current electronic articles, and in material from bone, papyrus, animal skin and palm leaf to paper and plastic. They are written in over 2,000 languages and originate from every continent on the planet. In this book we can give only a flavour of the variety of materials collected, preserved and made available to readers who themselves come from all parts of the globe.

The Library contains major collections from the past, which are used by today’s scholars to illuminate the present and help shape the world. We are also planning for the future, by collecting not just the writings of great figures like Newton and Darwin, Sir Robert Walpole and Siegfried Sassoon, but also the electronic scholarship of Stephen Hawking and other researchers of today. However, while we have learned

how to conserve the past, we are still wrestling with the problems created by the overwhelming output of the ‘information age’. Handling new electronic media in particular brings a fresh set of challenges in storage and retrieval, as the pace of technological progress quickens. As always, the Library has to think centuries ahead, safeguarding our intellectual heritage for the benefit of generations to come.

Cambridge University Library provides stunning resources that have inspired scholars and visitors for centuries. Its collections embody sweeping contrasts: ancient and modern, banal and arcane, pragmatic and creative. Its great legacy to the future is the evidence it contains of human innovation and endeavour, and the ways in which these have changed, and will change, the world around us.

We hope you will enjoy this book as an encouragement to come and see the Library for yourself and as a memento of your visit.



# Tablets of bone



The cover (an incised Imperial dragon) from *Yu bi Baita shan wu ji* (*Five views of White Dagoba Hill*): 1773. Jade books were reserved for the exclusive use of the Emperor of China.

The soothsayer who painstakingly carved inscriptions on the oracle bones over 3,000 years ago could never have predicted their fate. Once used to divine the future, now these earliest known specimens of Chinese writing are consulted by scholars from all over the world who are seeking answers to questions about China's past.

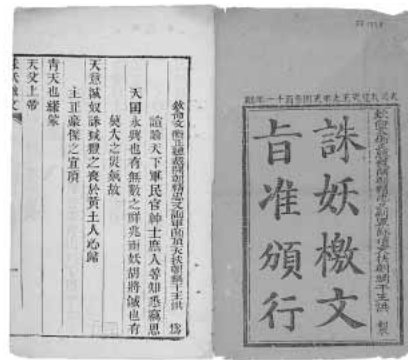
The bequest of Lionel Charles Hopkins (1854–1952), the 800 Chinese oracle bones dating from 1400 to 1200 BC, are by far the oldest items in the Library. Heat was applied to hollows chiselled out on the reverse of specially prepared ox scapulae and turtle shells and this produced characteristic cracks. The cracks were then interpreted as answers to questions that had been posed of the ancestral spirits. Exactly how this was done was obviously kept secret by the diviners themselves, but it is known that questions were posed in both positive and negative form, so as to ensure that the answer was correct. For instance: is it going to rain tomorrow? Is it not going to rain

tomorrow? – the same answer to both questions would be incorrect.

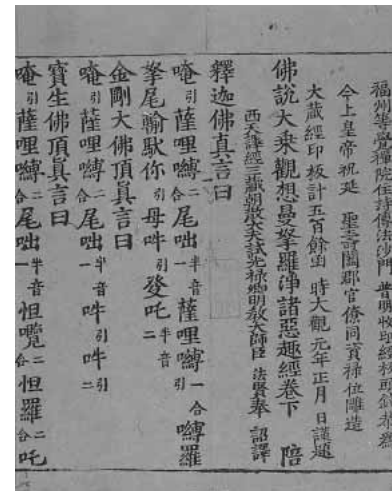
The texts provide rare insights into what concerned people most; in an agrarian society engaged in frequent wars with neighbouring tribes they would be interested in such matters as the weather, the failure of crops, hunting and military expeditions. It was believed that the deceased ancestors could influence the outcome of events. If something went wrong, this was because the ancestral spirits were displeased, so they would be asked through the medium of the oracle bones what sacrifice could be made to placate them.

## Chronicling strange lands and interesting times

The ancient oracle bones are just a part of one of the most outstanding Chinese collections outside China. It includes about 100,000 volumes of printed books, the earliest of which date from the 12th century AD, with rarities such as the unique *Illustrated*



The only known copy of *Zhu yao xi wen* (Proclamation on the extermination of demons), a publication of 1861, at the height of the Taiping Rebellion, which cost over 10 million lives.



*Fo shuo da cheng guan xiang man na lu jing zhu e qu jing* (a Buddhist text, translated into Chinese from Sanskrit). The oldest printed book in the Library: 1107.

*chronicle of strange lands* (*I yu tu zhi*) (c.1489); pamphlets and ephemera relating to the mid-19th century Taiping insurrection (most of those in China were subsequently destroyed); a set of the *Imperial encyclopaedia* (*Qin ding Gu jin tu shu ji cheng*), deposited on loan by the China Society of London; microfilms of nearly 3,000 rare titles from the National Library of China in Beijing; and two of the 11,095 fascicles (volumes) which originally constituted the encyclopaedic work *Yongle da dian*, salvaged from the fire in Beijing which in 1900 destroyed most of what then remained of the sole surviving copy.

These and other rare items, such as the gigantic examination papers from the Chinese civil service, some as big as a baby's blanket and which must have daunted many a candidate, or the only complete bound set in the UK of *Renmin Ribao* (the *People's Daily* newspaper) from 1946 to the present, which therefore dates back to before the establishment of the People's Republic

of China, offer fascinating glimpses into everyday life in China over the centuries.

Thanks to a generous donation, the Aoi Pavilion was constructed to ensure that these and other East Asian materials could be kept in one place for the first time, with 180,000 books on open access. This ease of accessibility attracts many scholars from all over the world, including China.



A Chinese oracle bone of about 1200 BC.

# ‘Better hidden than published’

“ This Library is one of the gems of the civilised world: it houses treasure troves of great and rare manuscripts; it restores and conserves damaged pages with immaculate care; it opens its vast and ever increasing collections to all who love books. It serves the written form of language, from the most humdrum to the most intriguingly arcane, with unsurpassed dedication.

**Joan Bakewell**  
Writer and broadcaster



When Théodore de Bèze (normally known by the Latin form of his name, Beza) sent his ‘dangerous’ gift to the University of Cambridge in 1581, his accompanying letter advised that it was ‘better hidden than published’. It was one of the earliest texts of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles in Greek and Latin, and it differed significantly in places from the accepted version. The French reformer suspected its ‘corrupt’ text was the work of early heretics, and feared its influence.

If Beza hoped that this volume would be safely lost to view in its new home, he entrusted it to the wrong institution: even half a millennium ago the Library supported the dissemination of knowledge and believed that intellectual access to its treasures should not be denied. Within 50 years of the University’s gracious acceptance of the gift, the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis was the focus of intense interest, which has continued to the present day. What was it about this deviant manuscript that had so alarmed Beza?

Written in majuscule (capital) letters in about the year 400, some 406 out of the original 534 parchment leaves (most of the four Gospels and Acts) have survived, with the Greek text on the left page (verso) and a Latin version of it on the right (recto).

Uncertainty and debate surrounds the Codex Bezae’s place of origin. What is indisputable is that the extensive manuscript was frequently corrected and annotated. Every corrector but the earliest one worked principally on the Greek text. There are numerous variations in the text of the Gospels, particularly Mark and Luke, and of Acts. These involve the addition or omission of words, sentences and even whole incidents. The additions are most conspicuous in Acts, which is nearly a tenth longer than the standard text.

Not surprisingly, the question of whether the Codex Bezae preserves the original authentic text or is a hopelessly corrupt version of the Gospels and Acts has been the subject of endless scholarly



Codex Bezae: opening with the Greek text on the verso and the Latin on the recto. The text is Luke 6, 1–9, and the hole is a flaw in the parchment, already there when the scribe wrote the page.

debate over the centuries, and no doubt will be into the future. All would agree, though, that the Codex Bezae offers more substantial variation from the normal text of the New Testament than any other surviving manuscript.

### An impure witness

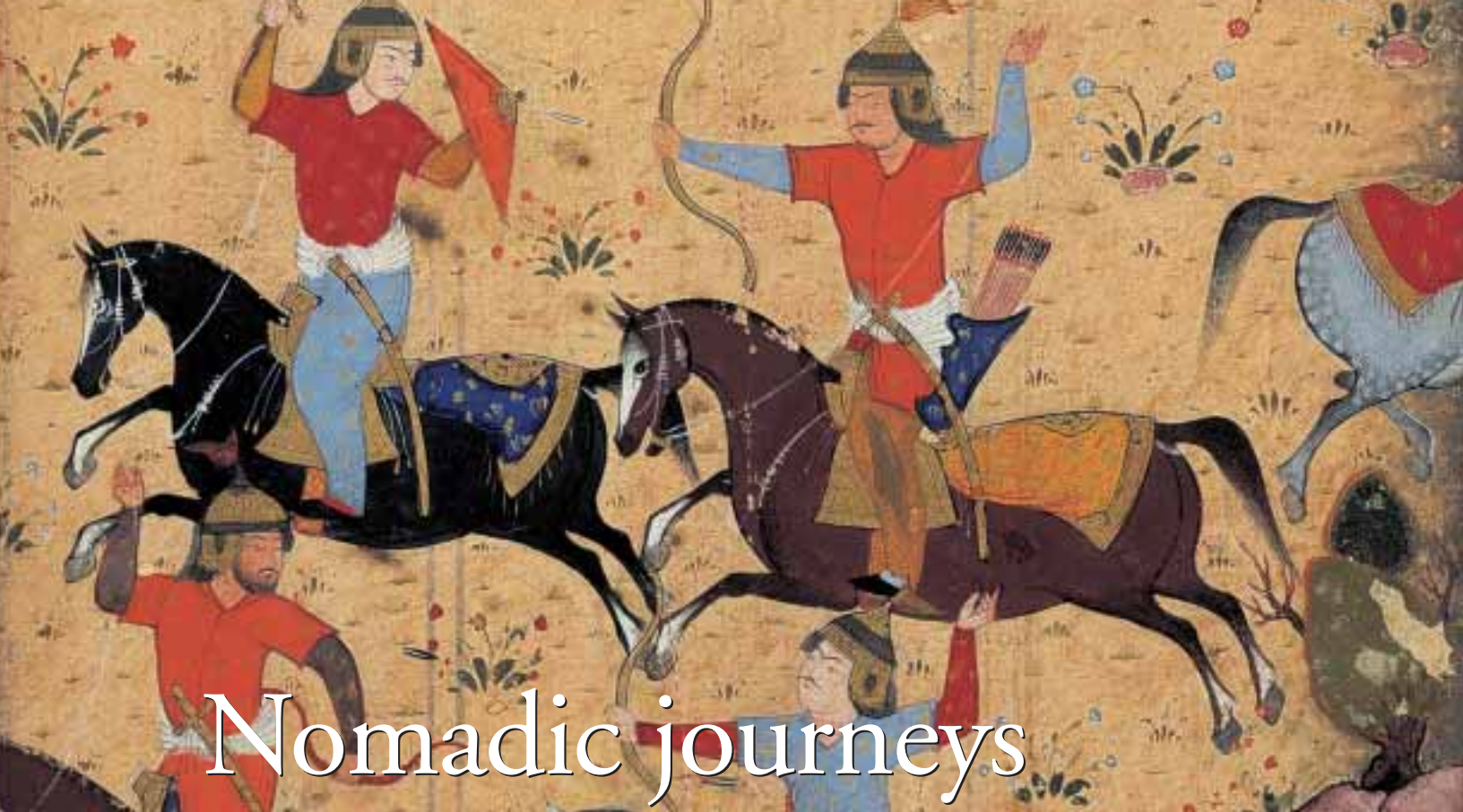
To some extent Beza's wishes might appear to have been fulfilled in that today the original manuscript is usually hidden from view: animal skin is a strong and durable substance but it cannot be expected to survive for 1,500 years unscathed. The metallic-based ink which the scribes used has released an acid which has slowly eaten through the fine parchment, weakening it. The very fineness leads to the pages curling sharply as soon as the pressure that keeps the volumes safely closed and preserved in their dark green boxes is released. However, the existence of an excellent published facsimile and of microfilm copies already means that the benefactor's apparent intentions have been thwarted. The Library also plans to digitise the entire manuscript and

make it available on the internet, which will not only make it much more widely accessible but will reduce the need to handle the original.

The Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis may not be the oldest, nor the most beautiful, and certainly not the most pure witness to the New Testament, but there can be few other manuscripts in existence about which more has been written. It is one of the most intriguing manuscripts of antiquity.



Codex Bezae.



# Nomadic journeys



From a 16th-century Persian treatise on astrology by al-Zayhaqi al-Kashifi.

Many manuscripts in the Library reached this oasis of scholarly calm via long and often nomadic routes, and it is a curious coincidence that some of the Islamic-Oriental materials had particularly eventful journeys.

## Dictionaries...

When Abraham Whelock became University Librarian in 1629, he found that although hopes were high, funds were low, and the organisation chaotic. For 30 years previously the Library had hardly acquired any books of consequence, and its Islamic-Oriental collection (Whelock's special area of interest) was negligible. Whelock, a man of modest and nervous disposition but a good scholar and passionately committed to the Library, set about change. His abilities won him a reputation in the learned world beyond Cambridge and the friendship especially of Sir Henry Spelman and Sir Thomas Adams, on whom he prevailed to establish the University's first lectureships in Anglo-Saxon and Arabic, the latter being given to Whelock.

Whelock's skilful custodianship not only gave the Library a certain respectable status in the world of scholarship but also attracted to it donations of books it was too impoverished to buy. But it was, inevitably, to the procuring of Islamic-Oriental books that Whelock first addressed himself.

In 1631 Whelock obtained from William Bedwell a Qur'an, having shrewdly informed him that Bedwell's old college, Trinity, already possessed one. Bedwell had spent much of his life compiling the first Arabic-Latin lexicon in nine volumes – consisting of nearly 4,000 leaves of paper and numerous slips of addenda. When Bedwell died in 1632, he bequeathed the manuscript lexicon to the Library, along with a fount of Arabic type imported from Leiden for its printing. However, Whelock had a considerable struggle to obtain them from Bedwell's son-in-law, who saw them as commercial assets. The lexicon was never published!



Detail: The combat of Afrasiyab and KayKhrusraw, from the 16th- or early 17th-century Persian manuscript 'Shahnamah' (Book of Kings) of Firdawsi.



A page from a Qur'an in Kufic script written in the 9th or 10th century in Iraq or North Africa.



Late 18th-century Urdu manuscript of Mīr Hasan's poem 'Sihṛ ul-bayān' ('Enchanting story').

### ...and daggers

Another significant gift of manuscripts also arrived by a circuitous route, delayed this time by the inconvenience of an assassination. The Duke of Buckingham, elected Chancellor of the University in 1626, secretly bought a library of Islamic-Oriental manuscripts from the widow of Thomas Erpenius, professor of Oriental languages at the University of Leiden. Buckingham's avowed intention was to donate the collection to the University Library, but his politically motivated murder in 1628 held up matters somewhat. It took four years before Richard Holdsworth, Master of Emmanuel College (himself a significant benefactor), personally managed to persuade the Duchess to fulfil her late husband's promise. Erpenius's library numbered 87 volumes and included some of the oldest surviving Islamic manuscripts in Malay. Others were in Arabic, Coptic, Javanese, Hebrew, Syriac and Persian. One of the most important Persian manuscripts of this collection is the second half of a commentary of the

Qur'an in old Persian alongside the Arabic text. This is the oldest Persian manuscript held in the Library.

Today the range of Islamic-Oriental manuscripts in the Library's safekeeping is considerable: as well as the beautifully illuminated Qur'ans, there are historical texts such as al-Ya`qubi's *History of the world since Adam*, which was long believed to be a unique copy; Persian manuscripts of poetry; a medical

treatise in Arabic consisting of translations of Hippocrates and Galen, with commentaries from the 13th century; and texts of Islamic theology, sciences and arts. Assembled together, they demonstrate that early Oriental scholars were long ago making intellectual connections with other cultures, connections that were lost sight of in the intervening 'desert' years, and which can only now be painstakingly rebuilt.



The opening surah of the Qur'an: a magnificent copy, probably c.1600.



# Generations of knowledge

“ Countless times, while pursuing my research in Cambridge University Library, I have stumbled on a crucial source, two books away on the shelf from the one I had set out to consult. There is no greater luxury for the scholar than a great open-stack library.

**Lisa Jardine**  
Professor of Renaissance Studies, Queen Mary, University of London



Every book. Every periodical. Every printed map. Every piece of sheet music. Throughout its history, the Library has depended on purchases, donations and bequests – and, since 1662, on being one of Britain’s libraries of ‘legal deposit’ entitled to claim a copy of every item published in the UK and Ireland. At first, this was part of legislation intended for the control and censorship of the press. Then, in 1710, the *Act for the Encouragement of Learning by Vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of such Copies During the Times Therein Mentioned* confirmed the Library’s status. It gave publishers copyright protection on certain conditions – one being that they had to send copies of their books to a number of privileged libraries, Cambridge among them.

The Act initially was only partly successful. Resentful publishers either ignored it or devised ingenious methods of evading their obligations, while the University deemed many of the books unsuitable for its learned shelves. It was

not until well into the 19th century that the Library began seriously to embrace its responsibilities as a repository of national literature. Today Cambridge University Library takes its special role as a legal deposit library (previously called a copyright library) very seriously indeed: it forms part of the national published archive. Many libraries regard the printed text as a replaceable item: they keep multiple copies of the latest editions of books and dispose of superseded editions. Cambridge generally keeps only one copy of each edition and aims to preserve it for ever. In addition, for many publishers it represents their own archives; at times they approach the Library to refer to copies of their own publications which they no longer have.

Uniquely among the six legal deposit libraries, Cambridge stores two million of its books (about a quarter of its collections) in open-access stacks, allowing readers the facility of browsing among works on related subjects. It is therefore one of the largest open-access

Legal deposit intake of the 1920s; these shelves contain mainly novels, stored in the Library tower in their original dust jackets.



From Catherine Sinclair, *Picture Letters* (Edinburgh 1864), received under legal deposit.



Most copies of this 1936 book were destroyed in a warehouse fire: this is one of only two copies known to exist with its original dust jacket.

libraries in the world. Users of all kinds, from Cambridge, from other parts of Britain, and from other countries, have repeatedly expressed their appreciation for the ways in which easy access to the shelves has helped their work.

The Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003 brought electronic publications and other non-print material into the scope of the previous legislation. However in spite of all the predictions of the death of the book, the increasing availability of electronic resources is not yet being matched by any decrease in traditional paper publishing. Each year, nearly two miles of extra shelving has to be provided for the 120,000 books received by the Library, not to mention the 150,000 issues of serial titles and thousands of maps and other documents. That represents about the same distance as a visitor would travel in a taxi from Cambridge railway station to the Library itself.

This puts immense pressure on restricted resources, but the legal deposit collection,

which represents about two-thirds of the annual intake, is one of the Library's greatest strengths. In the 21st century, it continues to fulfil its obligation to receive, catalogue, store and make available the widest possible coverage of material in conditions suitable not only for preservation, but also for the benefit of its users, both present and future.



The Library makes extensive use of mobile stacks to maximise its storage capacity; each of these stacks contains several tons of books but can be moved easily thanks to sophisticated gearing.



# Munificentia Regia 1715

“ The special collections of the UL are an extraordinary treasure trove and when I first encountered them as a research student and later as a Research Fellow, I discovered gems of information that transformed knowledge and my own approaches to it.

**Dr David Starkey**  
Historian



The identity of the man whose collection, more than anything else, transformed the University Library into a true working library for study and research, is hidden behind an elaborate royal bookplate. 1715 was the date of one of the greatest benefactions in the Library's history, when King George I repaid the University's loyalty during the year of the Jacobite rising by presenting it with the library of the late Bishop of Ely, John Moore, who had died in 1714. The University's address of thanks was appropriately fulsome: the donation enhanced the Library's collections in a spectacular way.

*'The noble Collection of Books & Manuscripts gatherd in many Years by the Great Industry & Accurate Judgement of the late Bp of Ely, tho' in itself exceeding valuable, is upon no account so Welcome to Yr University, as it is a Testimony of Yr Royal Favour; the Memory of w<sup>ch</sup> will be constantly preserv'd by this Ample Benefaction, worthy to bear the Title of the Donor, & to be for ever styled the Royal Library.'*

Moore's vast collection of books dated back to his undergraduate years, but little is known about how and when he acquired them. Certain themes are discernible however, medicine being one. As early as 1663 he wrote his name (and the price) on the flyleaf of William Harvey's *Exercitationes de generatione animalium* (Amsterdam 1651). Law was another interest, and there are also remarkable examples of early English printing including over 40 Caxtons, some of them unique. The Library's previously sparse coverage of comparatively recent publications was highlighted by the fact that books such as Newton's *Principia mathematica* (London 1687) and *Opticks* (London 1704), Halley's *Miscellanea curiosa* (London 1705–7), Boyle's *Sceptical chymist* (Oxford 1680), and John Wallis's *Opera* (Oxford 1657) were only now received for the first time.

Arguably the greatest treasures in the Royal Library, though, are the notable early manuscripts, many with stunning illuminations. Those from the 8th

Detail: Book of Cerne: frontispiece of the Gospel of St Mark, with his symbol the lion.



Book of Deer: frontispiece of the Gospel of St John.



An ear inspection, from 'Le gouvernement de corps domme', an early 15th-century manuscript that belonged to King Henry VII.

and 9th centuries include the earliest English text of Caedmon's Hymn in Bede's *Ecclesiastical history of the English people*, the Book of Cerne, with its technically amateurish yet markedly intellectual images and bold, fancifully formed capital letters; and the Book of Deer, only 'discovered' in the 1860s by the then University Librarian, the 'lynx-eyed' Henry Bradshaw.

However even in the 1970s the strange charm of its illuminated pages was castigated by an editor of the Gaelic notes as being 'of the most grotesque and barbarous crudeness'. Nothing could be further from the truth: the decorations belong to a well-defined Insular tradition of figurative art that can be related to ornament and calligraphy.

In fact the ingenuity of its design and sophisticated physical construction makes it reasonable to suspect that, far from being crude, the Book of Deer reflects richly decorated Insular Gospel books of around 800 AD, now lost.

### 'Grotesque and barbarous crudeness'

The Book of Deer contains parts of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and the whole of John. Its diminutive scale (15.4cm by 10.7cm) and the inclusion after St Mark of a litany for the visitation of the sick, link it to an interesting Irish series of private pocket Gospel books.

The importance of the Gaelic notes added to the book in the north-east of Scotland in the 12th century has been widely recognised, and the manuscript's significance in linguistic and social history long appreciated.



The 12th-century Winchester Pontifical, showing Mass for a bishop on the day of his consecration.

# 'An ocean of truth'

Is. Newton  
Anno 1682

Aug 19  
Saturday at 1<sup>h</sup> 20' P. Med. Noct. A, f. R.  
in a right line. fR was = to twice fG  
tayle pointed to E in y<sup>e</sup> Beams  
& was about 6 degrees long reaching

Aug 20  
Sunday at 9<sup>h</sup> 20' before midnight fS =  
3 SH. fF = fS = 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  fF. fSf = 3 $\frac{1}{2}$  fg.  
tayle ended over against y<sup>e</sup> middle of  
& ~~cut~~ produced cut of  $\frac{1}{4}$  or  $\frac{1}{5}$  of C  
towards C.

Aug 21  
Monday at 8<sup>h</sup> 40' at night RTV =  
a right line. TV = 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  fg. The tayle  
over against H, & pointed towards B.

“ A library is a basic facility in a research operation. It's the way that you see what other people have done so that you can build upon the foundation that's been laid by other investigators. Libraries, of course, are not what they used to be – they're not merely collections of books and other documents. Increasingly, they're the means of electronic access to the knowledge of the world.

**Dr Gordon E Moore**  
Founder of the Intel Corporation



Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) was the greatest natural philosopher of his age – and perhaps of any age – but the workings of such an extraordinary mind are difficult to unravel. Newton consistently concealed his methods until they had produced definite results, and he hid his assumptions from investigation by others until they had proved themselves trustworthy. One of Newton's younger contemporaries, the Swiss mathematician Johann Bernoulli, once ruefully remarked that Newton's methods were so startlingly original that on their own they were enough to identify him, 'as a lion can be recognised from his footprint'. Such 'lion's footprints', the most concrete traces of Newton at work, can be found in his manuscripts, books and papers. These tell a far more complicated and remarkable story than the easy tale of genius.

Although widely known for his law of universal gravitation, Newton's scientific and intellectual interests were vast, and this range of creative thinking is reflected in the Macclesfield Collection. The 950

manuscript notebooks, letters and bundles of unbound papers in this collection document the writings of Newton and his associates on gravitation, fluxions (calculus), the *Principia*, mathematics, optics, astronomy and other subjects. They provide compelling insights into Newton's thinking. Yet until the Library was able to purchase the Collection from the Earl of Macclesfield in 2000, after a highly successful fundraising campaign, little of this revealing material had been published, and access to it had been severely restricted because one of the most important and valuable collections of scientific papers in Britain had been in private hands.

Even before the acquisition of the Macclesfield Collection, the Library held by far the largest group of Newton's scientific papers, chiefly in the Portsmouth Collection, which had been presented by the fifth Earl of Portsmouth in 1872 to join manuscripts of Newton's lectures as Lucasian Professor and records of his Cambridge career.

Newton's record of observations of the comet of 1682, now known as Halley's Comet, written on a scrap of paper perhaps torn from a letter.



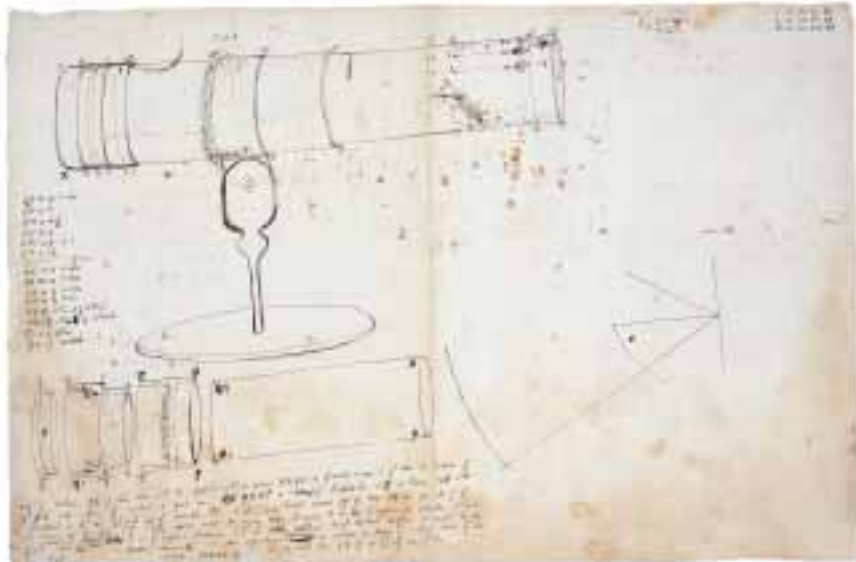
Newton's experiment with a bodkin pressed behind his eye.



Letter from Newton to Robert Boyle (28 February 1679) about the nature of the æther and the possible mechanical causes of the behaviour of light.

The Macclesfield and Portsmouth Collections are closely interrelated. Material on some topics, such as the dispute with Leibniz over priority in the invention of the infinitesimal calculus, is spread over both collections and, in some cases, replies to letters in one collection are to be found in the other. Now the two major sections of the Isaac Newton archive, separated following his death, are reunited in Cambridge for the benefit of scholars and the public, and many of the documents have already been digitised and made accessible to everyone via the internet.

It is said that Newton once remarked, 'I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me'. All those who have the chance to study the 'lion's footprints' and the development of Newton's scientific theories through the collections at the Library would probably want to disagree.



Drawing by Newton of his reflecting telescope and its parts.

# Silver threads on crimson velvet



Cambridge University Library, with its open shelves and its profound riches in manuscripts and rare books, encourages boundary-crossing, conversation, and lateral connections. It has made my interdisciplinary work possible.



**Dame Gillian Beer**  
Emerita King Edward VII  
Professor of  
English Literature,  
University of Cambridge

The sense of tactile pleasure upon opening a book, whether it be a brand new one, a well-loved copy, or one that has been sitting on the Library's shelves waiting patiently for its time to come, is something that will never be gained from turning on a computer. When that book is bound in soft crimson velvet embroidered with silken threads or encased in smooth morocco with gold tooling, and printed on fine parchment or heavy vellum, the epithet of bibliophile or book-lover can be all the more easily understood.

Such beautiful volumes were bequeathed to the Library by Samuel Sandars in 1894. Sandars, a member of Trinity College, was the greatest benefactor of his time. He had been wooed by two University Librarians, Henry Bradshaw and Francis Jenkinson, and much of his collecting taste had been moulded by their advice: he added 203 incunabula (books printed during the 15th century) to the Library's collection. Throughout his life he gave money, manuscripts and

printed books, and when he died he left 1,500 valuable items as well as a further sum of money to be spent on 'rare English books'. The Sandars Readership in Bibliography, instituted in 1895 and continuing today in the annual series of Sandars Lectures, is an enduring monument to his generosity.



Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De officiis* (Mainz 1465). The first printed edition of a classical text. Copy printed on vellum.



John Udall, *Certaine sermons* (London 1596). Contemporary crimson velvet binding, embroidered in silver thread and silks with the arms of Elizabeth I.



Page from a French translation of Virgil's *Eclogues* (Paris 1516), printed on vellum and evidently designed to look as much like a manuscript as possible.



Sisto Ponceilo da Caravonica, *Le sacre historie del'Antico Testamento* (Padua 1569). Dedication copy to Cosimo de Medici (1519–74), Grand Duke of Tuscany, whose arms – featuring the ducal crown and the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece – are painted on the black morocco binding.

Sanders's gift not only enriched the Library with exquisite examples of rare books and illuminated manuscripts, but also had an additional and long-lasting impact. For the first few centuries of its existence, the Library lacked its present pre-eminence in the minds of visitors and alumni. In the eyes of tourists searching for grandeur, its buildings were unimpressive while, with a few notable exceptions, many alumni who considered bequeathing their libraries tended to think first of their colleges. Sanders's decision to leave the cream of his collection to the University Library changed that habit. Where Sanders led, others followed, and by the beginning of the 20th century, the tradition of giving to the Library was firmly established.

Early 12th-century manuscript of Rabanus Maurus, 'De laudibus sanctae crucis' showing the third figured poem in the series, 'Salve sancta salus Christi', with the words 'Salus crux' highlighted in the form of a cross.





# ‘In haste and great excitement’



A Judeo-Arabic letter of recommendation, in autograph, written for a friend by Moses Maimonides (1138–1204), a leading figure of the medieval Jewish world.

Solomon Schechter’s great excitement was justified. In 1896 the widowed twin Scottish sisters, Mrs Agnes Lewis and Mrs Margaret Gibson, gave the University’s Reader in Talmudic Literature some ancient scraps of paper they had purchased. These proved to be just some of the 140,000 fragments of Hebrew and Jewish literature and documents from the Ben Ezra Synagogue, founded in Fustat (or Old Cairo) in the 11th century. Schechter realised he had an astounding bibliographical discovery on his hands. On 13 May 1896 he wrote to the sisters ‘in haste and great excitement’, urging them to initial secrecy, for ‘the fragment I took with me represents a piece of the original Hebrew of Ecclesiasticus. It is the first time that such a thing was discovered.’

Encouraged, recommended and financed by the Master of St John’s College, Charles Taylor, Schechter spent the following winter in Cairo negotiating over interminable cups of coffee and cigarettes with the Chief Rabbi. He

finally obtained permission to examine and then to remove to Cambridge what became the unique Genizah Collection.

The officials of the Ben Ezra Synagogue had followed the widespread Jewish custom of not destroying texts on which the name of God or sections of the scripture were recorded. Instead, such materials were consigned to a *genizah*, or storage place, where they would disintegrate through natural processes or from which they could be taken for burial in a communal cemetery. In this particular case, however, a wide variety of everyday texts and writings were also deposited and the result is a fascinating collection of information ranging across every aspect of life in the Mediterranean area, spanning 13 centuries, and written in a dozen languages and dialects including Arabic.

## The sacred and the mundane

The containers that transported the fragile fragments back to the University Library held a cornucopia of scholarly riches. The Genizah Collection has



The Damascus Document, containing part of the religious ideology of the Dead Sea sect.



An Arabic tale of a lioness and a lion cub, with accompanying illustration, from about the 14th century.

revealed tantalising insights into both ordinary daily life a thousand years ago, and important clues for answering profound religious, ideological and historical questions. Children's school books and school reports, dowry lists and wedding contracts, early cheques from the 12th century with the familiar wording 'I promise to pay the bearer...', verses of the only known medieval woman poet writing in Hebrew, legal papers and musical notations have all been recovered from the Cairo *genizah*. Many lost Hebrew books and priceless sacred texts have been resurrected from the fragments including the original Hebrew version of the Wisdom of Ben Sira or Ecclesiasticus, a work dating back to the 2nd century BC, and the Damascus Document (or Zadokite Fragment), the first and fullest version of one of the Dead Sea sect's major religious tracts, which came to light 50 years before the Scrolls made their sensational impact on Jewish and Christian history. Famous personalities appear among the tattered texts, not just as distinguished authors but as

writers of personal letters, creditors requesting the payment of debts, and travellers waiting for a fair wind to begin their voyage.

Over the last hundred years, through active programmes of conservation, research and publication, these 'torn and stained testimonies to bygone ages' have led to exciting discoveries about

Jewish religious, communal and personal life, Hebrew and Arab culture, settlement in the land of Israel, and relations with Muslims and Christians from as early as the 9th and 10th centuries.

Much still remains to be done and no doubt as the work of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit proceeds, yet more secrets will be unfurled.



A child's Hebrew alphabetical exercise book from about the 10th century.



# Behind the shelves

“ I remember wonderful

days spent in the University Library – reading in the stacks when I was particularly interested in medieval Jewish life in southern France, and also having extraordinary conversations in the Tea Room when I allowed myself a break. Even though I go there rarely now, the smell of the place still brings back those glorious days spent working, thinking, and sometimes just gazing at the beautiful ceiling in the Reading Room.



**Baroness Neuberger  
DBE**

To the user or visitor, what makes a great library are the strength and breadth of the collections – manuscript, print and, increasingly in the 21st century, electronic – and the quality and speed of the service provided by the staff.

What the user sees is just the tip of the iceberg. To ensure that all runs smoothly on the surface, the University Library employs over 350 members of staff, with the great majority working ‘behind the shelves’, helping to manage the collections and integrate traditional and emerging formats.

- About 500 books and the same number of journal issues arrive on average every working day, either under legal deposit legislation or by purchase from all corners of the globe.
- It took the Library 500 years to acquire its first million books; 75 years to acquire the next 5 million and now it is adding books at the rate of a million every 8–10 years.

- There are over 100 miles (160 km) of occupied shelves – enough to stretch from Cambridge to Brighton, or half way from New York to Boston.
- As well as all its traditional books and magazines, the Library provides access to over 10,000 electronic journals.
- Around a quarter of a million of the rarer and more precious items are fetched every year from closed stacks to the various reading rooms for readers’ use. The average time a reader has to wait is about 30 minutes – much less than in many large libraries where 12–24 hours can be the norm.
- The service is increasingly 24/7, with over 60,000 hits on the Library’s website every day, 365 days a year.
- The Library is in all senses a world resource. Its users come from every continent, and many plan their visits to the UK so that they can spend weeks at a time working among the



A letter from the Macclesfield Collection before and after conservation.

collections. The catalogues can be consulted via the internet from any computer anywhere in the world. More and more parts of the collections are being digitised, so that users can have access to them without having to travel to Cambridge.

- The Library is committed to sharing its treasures – items have recently been on view in exhibitions in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Bruges, Berlin, Mannheim, Nancy, Tokyo and Canberra, as well as London and other UK venues.
- The Friends of the University Library foster contacts between the Library and those interested in its collections, its history, its current activities and its future. They also raise funds for the purchase of significant additions to the Library's collections, and for the conservation of those collections.

### Conserving wisdom

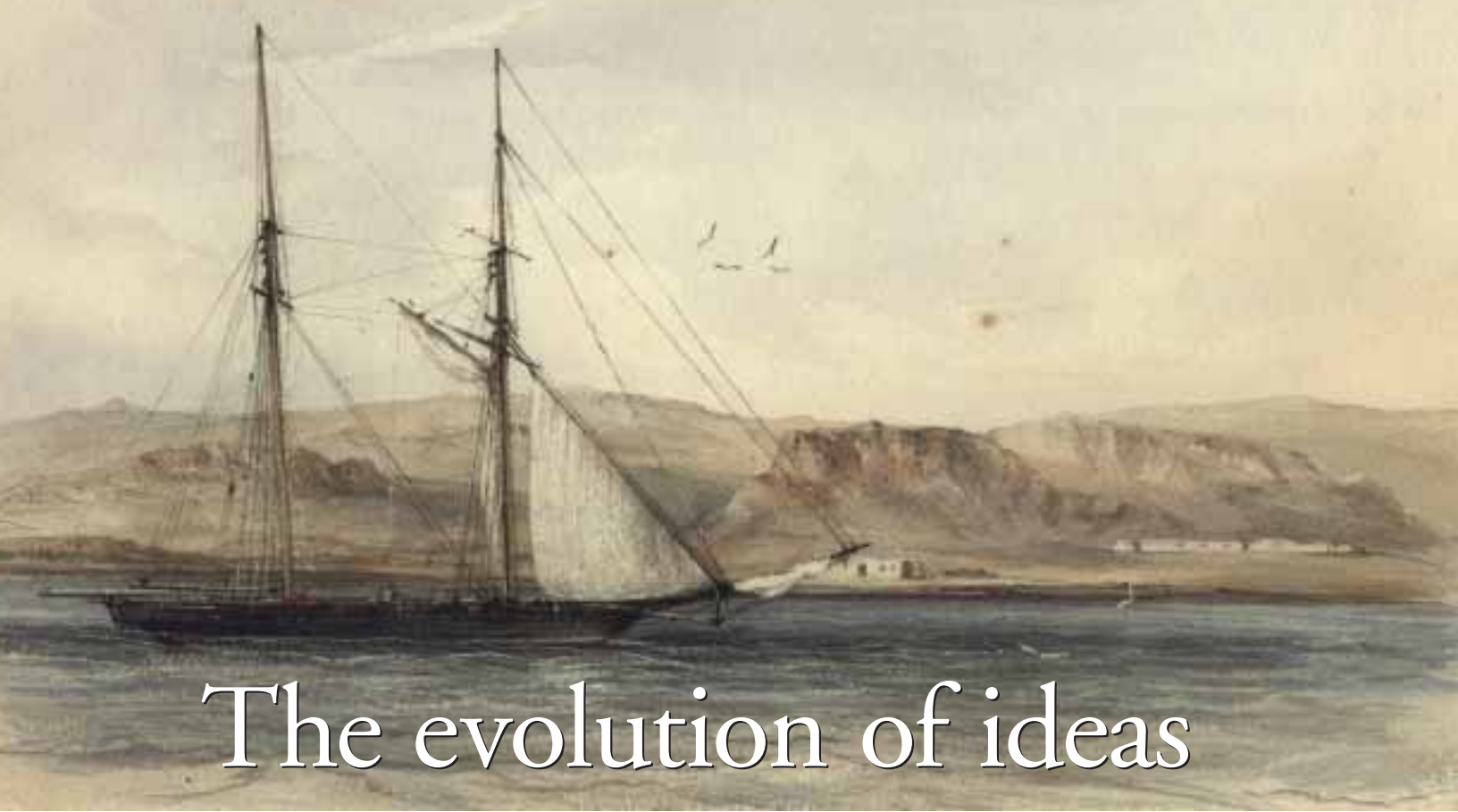
Some of the Library's contents were written several thousand years ago, some much more recently, but in many cases the paper is of poor quality; some have suffered from ill treatment before they came to Cambridge; and some have suffered from heavy use by present-day readers. The Library employs a team of conservators whose role is to ensure that the collections assembled in the past and used today will still be available to scholars in the future.

The Macclesfield Collection of scientific papers, which was bought in 2000, is a good example of the work undertaken by the Library's conservators. The collection consists of a wide range of materials including bound items and notebooks, items pasted into 'guard-books', loose single leaves, drawings and printed items. The bound volumes of letters (whose writers include Sir Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle, John Flamsteed, and Edmond Halley) contained some of the most important material and were in the worst condition. The original



The bound volumes.

structures, format and binding provided no suitable support or protection for the letters that had been pasted into them, and so they had to be removed and treated according to individual needs. Each letter was then pasted onto sheets of special paper and these were sewn and bound into volumes. The papers had frequently been folded, leading to lines of weakness; in some cases, the iron gall ink had burnt into the paper and caused it to tear. This damage has now been repaired and the collection can be safely used by scholars.



# The evolution of ideas

“ The first trip I took when making ‘Life on Earth’ was in Darwin’s footsteps to the Galapagos, to film the tortoises that inspired *Origin of species*. Darwin’s influence permeates our entire culture and the repository of his letters at the University Library provides a remarkably detailed insight into how he arrived at his theories. They are of immeasurable value to modern biological study – I know of no pleasure deeper than that which comes from contemplating the natural world and trying to understand it.



**Sir David Attenborough**  
Naturalist and broadcaster

Charles Darwin is a figure of such transcendent cultural importance and the object of such great scholarly and public interest that any document written in his hand is a treasure to its possessor. The Darwin archive, with its hundreds of manuscripts and thousands of letters, is the documentary record of Darwin’s entire working life and is one of the most important collections of scientific papers in existence. No brief description can do justice to it. The collection includes early correspondence with his family, letters sent while on HMS *Beagle*, autobiographical papers, Darwin’s own library of books and journals, and his working notes and experiment books. The archive has made Cambridge the world centre for Darwin studies and a major centre of research in the history of science in the 19th century.

## The voyage of the *Beagle*

It was, of course, the five-year circumnavigational voyage of HMS *Beagle* which determined Darwin’s whole career, and the manuscripts and

material related to that period make up more than 20 substantial bound volumes. They include almost daily records of observations made even when Darwin was sea-sick or in bad health. The archive includes Darwin’s extensive notes on the zoology and geology of the voyage, his lists of specimens collected, diagrams of geological sections, and many letters to family and scientific colleagues. The archive also includes the sketch books of Conrad Martens, who sailed with Darwin during part of the *Beagle* voyage; these are now extensively consulted by picture researchers; they have been digitised and mounted on the Library’s web pages.

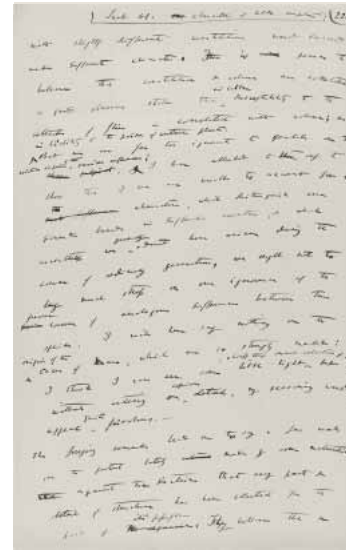
## The letters

Most of the material in the archive has been donated over the years by Darwin’s family and friends, ‘to keep together in the University Library... in order that it may be available to any future student of Darwin & his work’. It has arrived at the Library in varying states of preservation. Fifteen parcels of

Sketch made in Port Desire, Argentina, in 1833 by Conrad Martens during the voyage of HMS *Beagle*.



Charles Darwin.

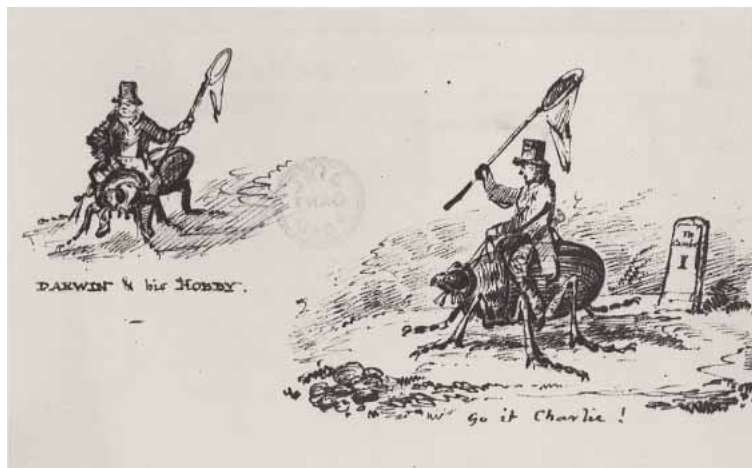


A leaf from the manuscript of *Origin of species*.

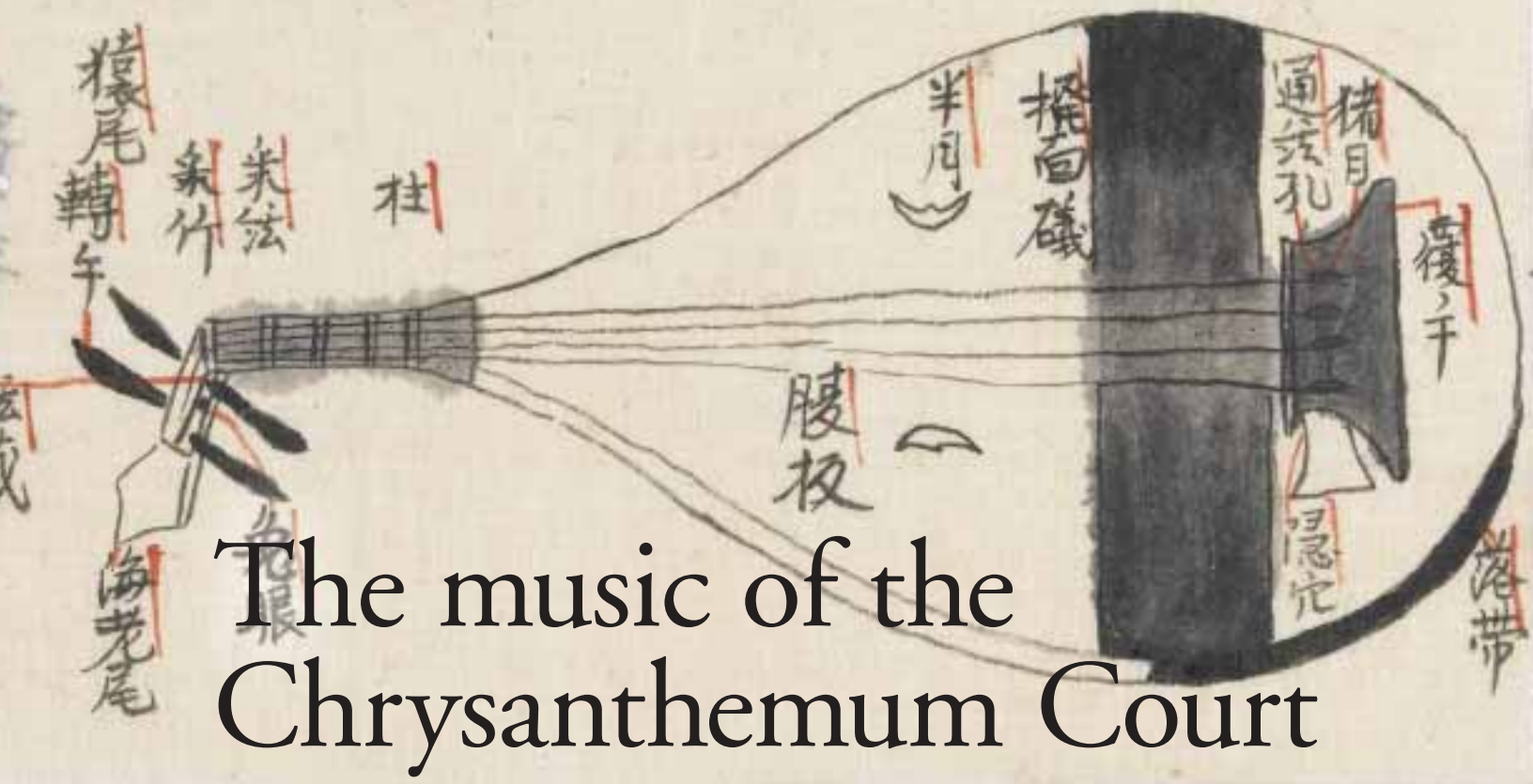
letters to Darwin dating from the years following the publication of *Origin of species* were rescued from a bonfire by Darwin's great grandson, Robin. The letters had been stored in cardboard boxes under damp conditions, and the ones at the bottom had unfortunately been reduced to compressed pulp. In contrast, other manuscripts were received in parcels wrapped in tissue paper on which the subjects had been noted in Darwin's own hand, and were presumably just as Darwin had left them.

Darwin's later work was unusually dependent upon correspondence, in part owing to his ill health and the reclusive life he consequently led, and in part owing to the nature of the work itself, which required communication with scientists all over the world, as well as with less eminent figures such as gardeners, army officers, diamond prospectors and pigeon fanciers. The letters also shed light on life among the Victorian gentry, and on the widespread and often hostile reactions to Darwin's theories.

Since 1974 the University Library has been the headquarters of the Darwin Correspondence Project, which is publishing a definitive edition of all the letters to and from Darwin that have been located to date. The letters total almost 15,000, of which around 7,500 are in the Darwin archive. They provide a remarkably complete picture of the development of Darwin's ideas.



A sketch of Darwin beetling while a Cambridge undergraduate.



# The music of the Chrysanthemum Court

“ I have said on many occasions over the years that if I hadn't been a musician, I would have probably been an archaeologist, a museum curator, or a librarian, as I feel strongly that the preservation of our rich cultural heritage must be maintained at all costs for future generations.



**Bill Wyman**  
Former bass player with  
The Rolling Stones

Ancient paper scrolls of Japanese music, fragile as flower petals, curled up in fragrant cedarwood boxes, and delicate manuscripts with exquisitely drawn characters and musical instruments, neatly protected by traditional indigo-coloured cloth bindings and secured with bone pegs... these are part of one of the most exotic gifts to the Library: Laurence Picken's collection on the musics of Asia, which he presented in 1976.

The archetypal Cambridge polymath, Picken was the Assistant Director of Research in Zoology at the University, a speaker of several Near and Far Eastern languages, and driven by a lifelong and extraordinary passion for music and musical instruments. His friendship in the late 1930s and 1940s with Paul Hirsch, the refugee German banker who had brought his already famous music collection to Cambridge, prompted Picken to embark on his initial collecting enterprise: 18th-century music treatises including examples from the works of J S Bach before the first

publication of *Das wohltemperierte Klavier* in 1800. Then a British Council scientific mission to China in 1944 led him to study Chinese, explore Chinese art and music, and learn to play the *qin* (board zither).

His fascination with the old music of China inspired Picken to track down the repertory of music from the Tang dynasty that had crossed the sea to survive in Japan, where musicians had devised a written musical notation to enable them to preserve and play it. Picken unearthed these musical materials mainly from the collections of the royal and noble households of Japan, now deposited in libraries in Tokyo and Kyoto. He acquired microfilms of over 70 important manuscripts, which he had printed and bound.

Picken added to his collection when he acquired 62 original *gagaku* manuscripts of old Japanese music; these came from the *Kikutei*, the musicians of the 'Chrysanthemum Pavilion', one of the noble houses in Kyoto. This unsung



A *biwa* (lute) from *Dako toyo sho* (*How to use the dako*) by Ryuhan, high priest of the Daijōin Temple, 1792.



Notational lines showing the sliding vocal ornament, from the *saibara* song *Anato*, from a book entitled *On-asobi* (*Enjoying music*), first performed in 864, copied in 1778.



Some items from the Picken collection, showing the traditional Japanese indigo bindings, the ivory pegs and the cedarwood boxed scrolls.

treasure-trove includes one of the earliest known scrolls of music for the *biwa* (Japanese lute), dated 1566, but notating music of perhaps three or four centuries earlier.

### Music, ancient and modern

Picken saw music very much as a live art, and as a musicologist he followed a forward-thinking 'performance-based approach' to the musics of other cultures. Consequently, when he first turned his attention to the music of Turkey, in 1951, it was natural that he should learn to play the Turkish *kuman* (plucked zither) and the *baglama* (lute), while collecting instruments and gathering information on Turkish folk music for what would later be his monumental work on *The folk instruments of Turkey* (Oxford 1975).

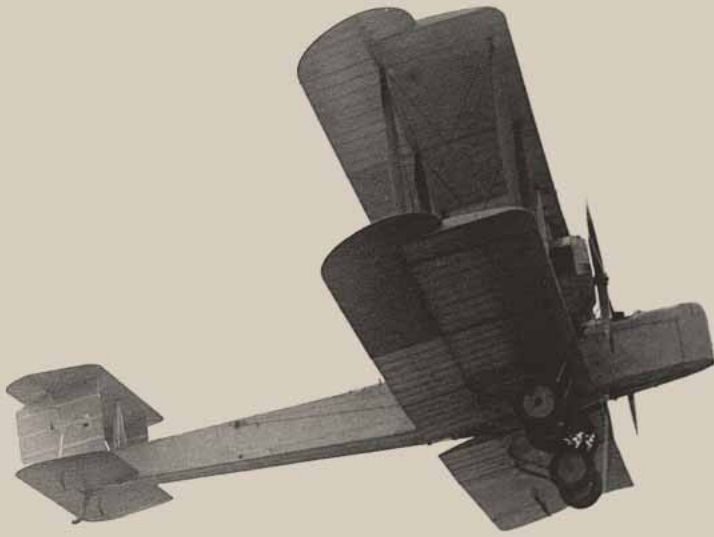
During his visits to China, Japan and Turkey over many years, Picken acquired a great range of printed matter, scores and books on the music of these and many Asian countries, all now accessible in the Library. However as the Picken

collection includes materials in numerous different languages, ancient and modern, it is not surprising that many of them are still awaiting interpretation, both musically and

linguistically. Until then, the written notations will ensure that even an element as transient as sound is safely, if for the time being silently, preserved.



Two pieces (*Bato* and *Chogeishi*) from *So sofu* (*To play the koto [zither]*).



# ‘Occasional glimpses of the sun. Still climbing.’



Britannia surveys with satisfaction a summary of almost 14,000 artillery pieces produced or repaired at the Elswick and Openshaw works of Sir W G Armstrong, Whitworth & Co Ltd during the First World War.

Two former RAF officers, Captain John Alcock and Lieutenant Arthur Whitten Brown, set off from St John's, Newfoundland, in a converted First World War bomber, a Vickers Vimy, at 4pm GMT on 14 June 1919. Despite thick cloud and sleet and only 'occasional glimpses of the sun' (as detailed in Brown's navigation log), some 16 hours and 1,900 miles later they crash-landed in an Irish bog. They had just completed the first non-stop transatlantic flight.

Documents relating to that flight form part of the vast Vickers plc company archive held by the Library. As well as papers, production reports, and legal and accounting records, the Vickers collection includes materials such as photographic negatives and cinefilm. It has only been comparatively recently that the value of such business archives has been recognised. From ocean liners to airliners, from machine guns to highest quality steels, in many ways the story of this company over the last 150 years reflects important aspects of

the history of the UK. Formerly stored in the head office of Vickers plc at Millbank, London, the records chart the rise and post-war metamorphosis of what was once one of the largest armaments companies in the world.

Vickers had its origins in early 19th-century Sheffield. At the beginning of the 20th century the family-owned steelworks was producing high quality steel castings, but as the shadows over Europe darkened before the First World War, it expanded into other areas including military equipment. Vickers built the first British submarine and airship, and among the wide variety of planes it developed was the Vickers Vimy which made that successful flight across the Atlantic the year after peace was declared.

The company had a voracious appetite for expansion and was heavily involved in the rearmament programme of the British forces in the lead up to the Second World War. The archive provides fascinating insights into the work of

The Vickers Vimy taking off from Newfoundland at the start of Alcock and Brown's non-stop transatlantic flight.



The Vickers-Saunders 'Valentia' flying-boat of 1921 was the product of a short-lived association between Vickers and the Isle of Wight concern S E Saunders & Co, and never entered full-scale production. This blueprint survives in the Vickers archive.

some of Britain's most talented engineers and designers such as Sir Barnes Wallis, designer of the Wellington bomber and inventor of the 'Dambuster' bouncing bomb, and Reginald Mitchell, whose brilliant early work on prize-winning Supermarine seaplanes culminated in his creation of the Battle-of-Britain-winning Spitfire.

After the Second World War, Vickers was responsible for the production of the first British nuclear submarine, the Valiant 'V'- bomber, and the Viscount and VC10 airliners. When it moved to Millbank Tower in 1963, the company had four main areas of manufacture: aircraft, steel, shipbuilding and general engineering. Upon leaving the Millbank premises in the 1980s, the company turned to Cambridge as a suitable home for its historical records.

Other business archives held by the Library have comparable significance. They include records of the Far Eastern trading firm Jardine, Matheson & Co, which were transferred from Hong

Kong in 1935 and form perhaps the largest single accumulation of company papers relating to commerce in the Far East during the 19th and early 20th centuries; a substantial body of archives of an insurance company founded in 1782, Phoenix Assurance, together with records of a number of its subsidiary companies; and the archives of the more local Cambridge Scientific Instrument

Company. The latter collection charts the history of this nationally important precision engineering concern between 1877 and 1971, and includes letter-books of the founding partner Horace Darwin (youngest son of the naturalist), whose practical genius for technological problem-solving propelled the company to prominence in an era of rapid advances in science and industry.



This trademark of the Hongkong Fire Insurance Company Ltd, managed by Jardine, Matheson & Co, decorates a policy issued in 1874 insuring the premises of the Club Lusitano in Hong Kong for \$30,000.



# ‘Where I learnt so much’

“ I have the happiest memories of the University Library from two periods of my life. First as an undergraduate, doing most of my studies in the Reading Room; and more recently through a specialist interest in colour printing. In the superb Waddleton Collection the Library possesses one of the world’s best collections of books with colour plates, and working among them is a joy.



**Bamber Gascoigne**  
Historian and  
broadcaster

A great library provides its users not just with texts and information, but also delights the senses and the spirit by displaying the craft of the men and women who have embodied those texts in beautiful creations. Many benefactors have ensured that the skills of the best calligraphers, printers, illustrators and binders are represented in the collections.

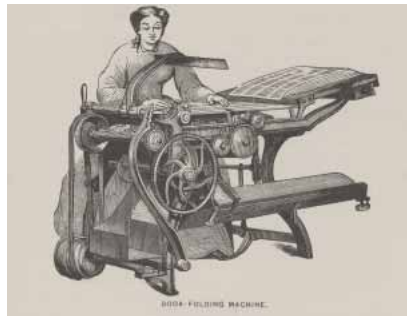
## The fine art of printing

One such benefactor was John Dreyfus, whose fondness for Cambridge led him ‘to ensure that my own collection eventually goes to the Cambridge University Library, where I learnt so much about typography while I was an undergraduate’. His bequest, made through the Friends of Cambridge University Library, enhanced the Library’s holdings of some of the finest printing of the 20th century. Dreyfus was a noted British typographer – he rose to become the Assistant University Printer at Cambridge University Press before succeeding Stanley Morison (designer of the Times New Roman font) as typographical adviser to the

Monotype Corporation. By upbringing a cosmopolitan figure, Dreyfus built up a library that reveals his close contacts with typography and fine printing in the USA, France, Germany and elsewhere. He knew the great typographers of his time, and many of the books from his collection contain personal inscriptions from the authors. His gift spans modern guides for printers, and works on typography and book design, as well as works by earlier printers such as Baskerville.

Dreyfus’s collection includes many examples from American and continental private presses, which often have limited print runs. Traditionally, books of this genre are both difficult to define and infinitely variable: many private press books are printed on hand-made paper with hand presses, while others use desk-top publishing; some are sumptuous and obviously expensive volumes, beautifully bound and illustrated, while others are unpretentious pamphlets or even single sheets. They range in size from the large folio to the miniature.

Detail: The cover of *Rappaccini's daughter: reflections on Hawthorne* by Edgar Allan Poe, Anthony Trollope and Henry James (Allen Press, Greenbrae, California 1991?), one of an edition of 115 copies.



Woman operating a book-folding machine, from T MacKellar's *The American printer: a manual of typography* (Philadelphia 1887).



Chechen and Lezghin hunters, from T de Pauly's *Description ethnographique des peuples de la Russie* (St Petersburg 1862).

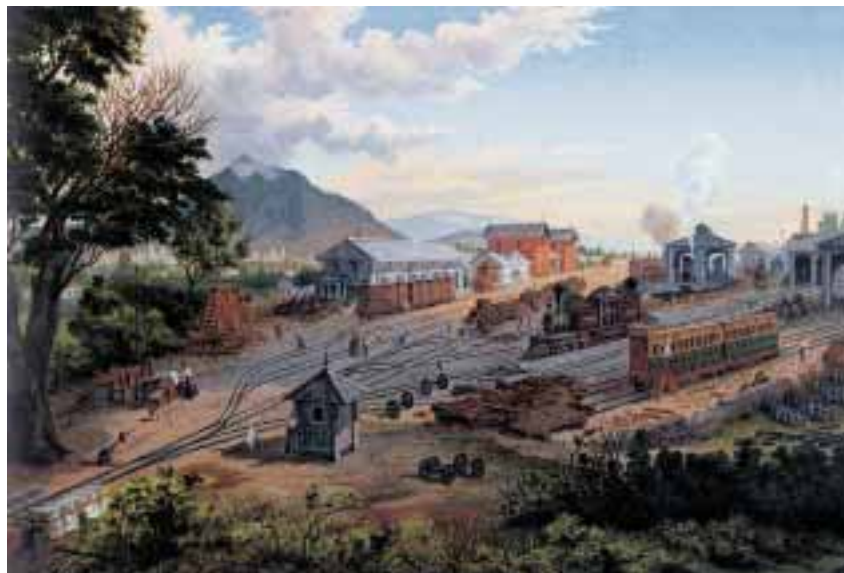
What is common to all is their intrinsic individuality, which can be appreciated only by seeing them – books such as these are communicating far more than the words they contain.

### Beauty brought to book

The kingfisher hues of natural history books compete with shimmering volumes on textiles, jewellery, ceramics, furniture and architecture. A catalogue of brightly decorated floor-tiles may be discovered alongside gift-books with coloured engravings. An illuminated breviary can be found next to a chapbook of Tom Thumb, probably once sold by a pedlar. Bibliophile and benefactor, Norman Waddleton's aim is simple yet ambitious: to 'assemble and record all books having colour-printed illustrations or decorations up to 1893', a date when major changes occurred to the process of printing in colour.

Early woodcuts, wood-engravings, intaglio printing from copper or steel plates, and chromolithography – the Waddleton Collection contains

stunning examples from all four methods of printing used to produce colour illustrations from the late 15th century to the late 19th. Norman Waddleton's dazzling collection is gradually being transferred to the University Library, even while he is still adding to it.



The station at Orizaba, from *Album del ferrocarril mexicano* (Mexico 1877).

# 'Issued daily, shells permitting'



The rich

Commonwealth collections at Cambridge University Library are a window into the life, history and heritage of the countries of the Commonwealth, which make up such an important part of the world and its people. When I use these collections I appreciate the importance of great libraries such as this one in preserving the memory of mankind.

**YBhg Tan Sri Dato' Seri Ahmad Sarji bin Abdul Hamid**  
Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia 1990–96



The idiosyncratic nature of a library can be its great strength, and of all the collections in the University Library, perhaps this most accurately describes that of the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS), assembled over nearly 140 years. Not only does it offer one of the largest assortments of books on a European empire, including the magnificent Cobham Collection of materials on Cyprus, but also ephemera, official papers, illustrations of all sorts, photographs, private papers, diaries and even artefacts. Anti-convict petitions, emigration pamphlets, information on the many Imperial exhibitions and timetables for the Canadian Pacific Railway jostle with great illustrated travel works like William J Burchell's *Travels in the interior of southern Africa*. Rare newspapers include the *Jamaica Gazette* of 1788 and the only known surviving copy of the *Royal Gold Coast Gazette and Commercial Advertiser of 1822–1823*, a paper founded by Sir Charles McCarthy during his ill-fated governorship of the Gold Coast settlements. Most valuably, there is

an almost complete run of the *Mafeking Mail*, 'issued daily, shells permitting', throughout the Boer War siege in 1899–1900; the price of one shilling a week was, cannily, payable in advance.

The visual materials in this astonishing collection range from the extremely valuable to the humble. In the former category is George French Angas's volume of 60 stunning colour plates in *The New Zealanders illustrated*, while the latter includes a wonderful collection of early 20th-century picture postcards of Zanzibar, Southern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, the Seychelles and Mauritius. The role played by women in the colonial era is not neglected: consider Mrs Tawse Jollie's articles on the 'Back of beyond in Rhodesia' and 'Some humours of housekeeping in Rhodesia' and the spectacular panorama of Simla in the 1860s by Lady Elizabeth Tennant. And then there are the extraordinary artefacts: a feather from the crown of the Zulu king Cetshwayo, an 18th-century pocket globe, a south Pacific musical instrument, a slave shackle,



The Mafeking Mail of 27 November 1899.



One of a set of postcards of about 1900 showing scenes in Khartoum, issued by Sudan Government Railways and Steamers.

and even a statue of the Virgin Mary that survived the 1902 eruption of Mount Pelée, Martinique.

### Breathing life into ‘a dead thing’

With over 300,000 printed items and 100,000 photographs, by the late 1980s this giant ‘cuckoo’ had outgrown its original home at the Royal Commonwealth Society. Severe financial pressures led to a report condemning it as ‘a dead thing’ and advising that it should be sold off. After a public outcry and successful fundraising appeal to save it for the nation, the RCS collection

came to the University Library in 1993. It offers an almost unrivalled resource for scholars pursuing global studies, but is also consulted by many others, including relatives of POWs using the British Association of Malaysia and Singapore archives to verify pension applications, and teachers of history, citizenship and related courses.

One challenge is how to respond to the increasing number of requests from all over the world. The collection is far too big for open access, and many fragile items are in danger of gradual

deterioration. Many of the archive collections have been catalogued and can be consulted via the internet. Sometimes this has led to enquiries being received the day after items are first catalogued.

The RCS library has survived bombing, fire, flood, theft, endemic financial crises, and the threat that it would be broken up and sold off. Securely housed in the University Library, it will now survive for many more years as a vast and vital resource for the study of European imperialism.



A panoramic view of the Singapore River, taken in the 1920s.



# A spotlight on Footlights

“ The desultory pleasure of browsing the University Library, indulging a passion for wandering through stacks of unknown treasures and marvelling at the ocean of knowledge that lay undiscovered before me was one of the most gratifying experiences of my University days. If you think the internet has the answers and nobody needs libraries any more, just visit the UL and see how libraries still stand as civilisation’s greatest monuments.

**Stephen Fry**  
Writer, actor  
and comedian



Documents and ephemera, letters and accounts – not to mention 750 years’ worth of records, reports and royal charters – the University Archives are one of the less well-known parts of the Library’s holdings. They include information on University societies, and recently the spotlight was focused on the Footlights Dramatic Club, renowned for its witty revues which have featured so many subsequently famous actors and comedians.

An astonishing accumulation of memorabilia, the Footlights archive was amassed by Dr Harry Porter, for decades a prominent figure in the society. It includes an almost complete collection of production records (everything from posters to photographs, and scripts to set designs) for Footlights performances, as well as newspaper reviews, committee minutes and accounts. Dr Porter added to the primary sources with his own and others’ historical research material: photocopies and notes of related records elsewhere, and news cuttings.

The Footlights material came to the Library following his death in 2003.

The archives date back to the first production of the Footlights Dramatic Club in May Week 1883, when a group of undergraduates put on a musical comedy – a burlesque – called *Orlando Furioso* by William Barnes Rhodes. Footlights’ early shows were existing musical comedies and farces, but, in 1892, the Club began its since unbroken tradition of presenting an original show for May Week, composed of an eclectic mix of burlesque, comedy sketches, satire, songs and instrumental music. Since the 1950s, it has been usual to follow the Cambridge run with performances in London, the South East and the Midlands, at the Edinburgh Festival and occasionally overseas. The archives document it all.

## Star materials

One of the fascinations of the Footlights collection is the way it records the ‘first entrances’ of many of the great names of the British media – actors, writers,



Some of the cast of the 1964 review doing silly things on the Backs ('Goodie' Graeme Garden is second from the right).



Griff Rhys Jones, Geoffrey McGivern and Clive Anderson in the 1974 review 'Chox'.

satirists and comedians who have become famous internationally. Down the decades the cast lists have included Jonathan Miller, David Frost, Peter Cook, Clive James, 'Pythons' John Cleese, Graham Chapman and Eric Idle, and Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie. Women first appeared in a production in 1932 and again in 1957. From 1959 they were regular players, and were accorded full Club membership in 1964. Eleanor Bron, Miriam Margolyes, Germaine Greer and Emma Thompson have all featured in productions.

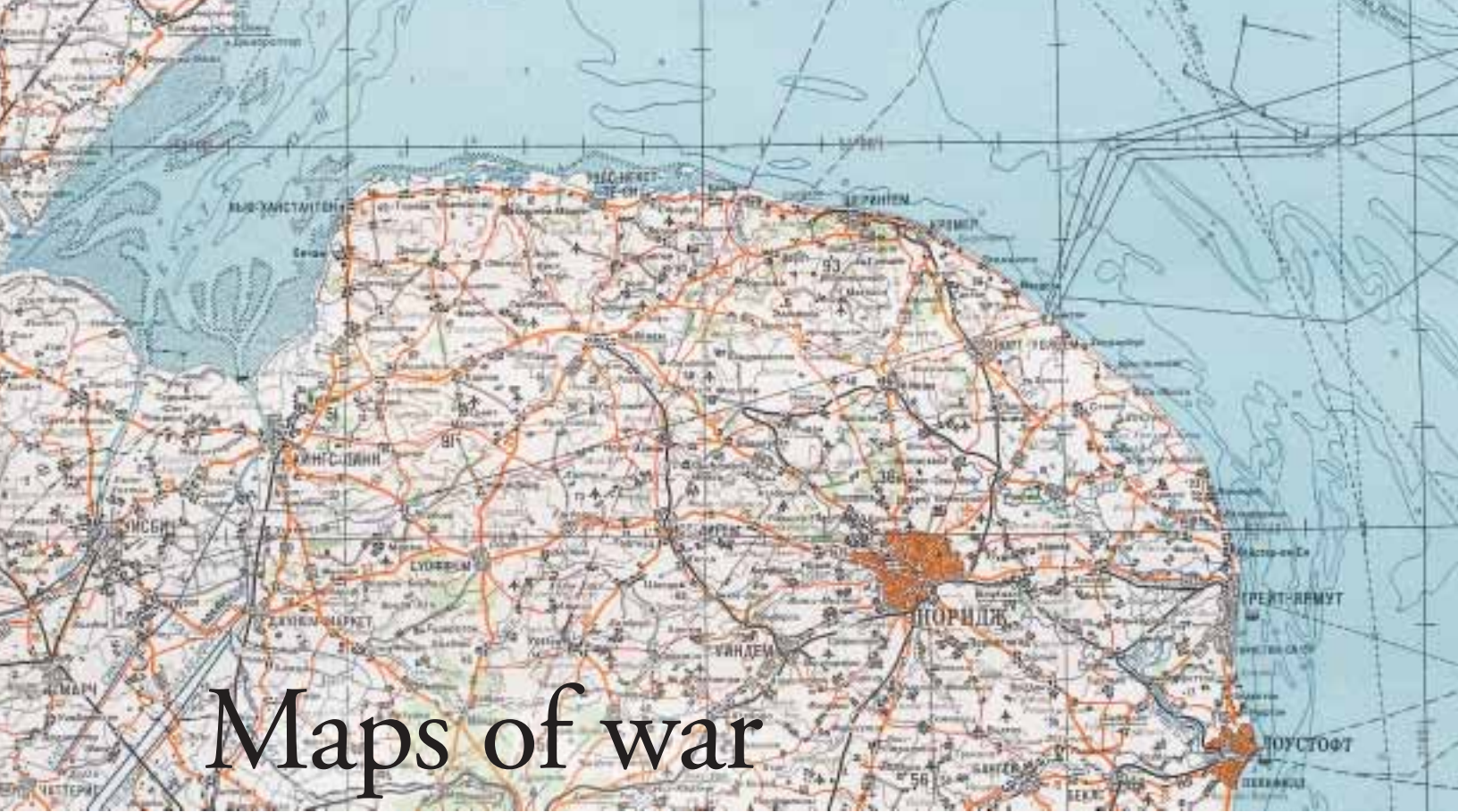
The collection has already been catalogued and the records can be searched on the Library's Janus archive webserver. These invaluable materials are proving as popular with students of theatre and comedy history, as with TV production companies.



Germaine Greer (at the back) and Eric Idle (second from left) in the 1965 review 'My girl Herbert'.



John Cleese in the 1963 review 'Cambridge Circus'.



# Maps of war

“ The Cambridge University Library is an essential resource for someone with diverse interests such as myself. I use its journals for current research in planetary sciences, its map collections as an historical source (for example to help locate HMS *Beagle*, my spacecraft’s antecedent, on the Essex marshes) and its comprehensive newspaper archives in connection with the public understanding of science.



**Colin Pillinger**  
Professor of Planetary Science, Open University, and leader of the *Beagle 2* project

‘In the Spring of 1958 I was commanding a Field Survey Detachment which was carrying out sheet-by-sheet rapid revision of old one-inch maps of southern Johore prior to operations designed to clear the last groups of terrorists from southern Malaya. Apart from our own explorations we were working closely with the local police, the SAS, and the intelligence rooms of the brigades of the Gurkha Division who would be doing the fighting. One day I heard that the police had ambushed and killed a terrorist courier a little way from our camp and when I spoke to a friendly police officer about it he said that they had found some maps in his knapsack. He showed them to me and when he saw my interest allowed me to keep them. I think that, as they may be unique, the UL might be a good permanent home for them – if you are willing to have them.’

The Library responded to Tony Baggs’s letter of April 2004 with a swift ‘yes’. The collection of the Map Department

comprises more than 1.2 million map sheets and over 32,000 atlases and books. These include printed and manuscript maps, charts and topographic views, plus atlases and gazetteers from the 16th century to the present. However, as this is probably the best collection of modern maps in the British Isles that is available to the general public, the Department is keen to ensure that its collection includes not only rare and obscure items from the past, but also more recent maps which may be significant in their own right. Tony Baggs’s gift of the Malayan maps falls into this latter category. Although the paper is poor, the printing quality is remarkably good. A question-mark hangs over where they were printed: they are certainly beyond the resources of the jungle camps in which the ‘terrorists’ lived.

These are not the only unusual military maps in the Map Department: others include John Luffman’s ‘A map intended to illustrate the threatened invasion of England by Bonaparte’ (1803), trench

1:500,000 scale Soviet General Staff map of East Anglia, published in 1985 and clearly indicating the many military and civilian airfields.



One of the four maps of part of Malaya presented to the Library by Tony Baggs. The Pahang River, the country's main river, flows east to the South China Sea.



A map intended to illustrate the threatened invasion of England by Bonaparte (London 1803). The borders show plans of 18 'ports of the enemy'. Also shown are the distances between these and British ports.

maps from the First World War, and many more-recent maps donated by the Ministry of Defence, such as those produced during the conflict in the Falkland Islands. Most chillingly, the collection includes a fascinating series of Soviet military maps that have been purchased on a continuing basis since the demise of the Soviet Union. The Soviet military machine seems to have mapped most of the world during a period spanning the Cold War. Its maps of the UK are extraordinarily detailed: the cartographers even marked which roads were wide enough and which bridges high enough to allow tanks access. Every building of strategic importance was accurately shown (even those such as naval dockyards that had been deliberately omitted from Ordnance Survey maps), and some 80 town plans were produced. What makes the familiar so strange is that place names and other words are printed in the Cyrillic script. Phonetic pronunciations are given – Норидж (Noridzh) for Norwich for instance – so that the invading Soviet soldier



Extract from 1:25,000 Soviet General Staff map of London published in 1985; the Houses of Parliament, the Treasury and Buckingham Palace are marked in purple to indicate their significance. Секретно means Secret.

could check that he had arrived at the right destination. Most of the maps are labelled 'Top secret'. Now they are regularly consulted by students of military history and others who are seeking to chart the reach of one of the world's former superpowers.



# ‘In the beginning’



The Library's digitisation studio.

Occasionally the Library receives new books from the publisher before they are officially published; sometimes it has to wait rather longer – in the case of one particular item, nearly half a millennium after its publication in 1455. So it was not surprising that when Arthur William Young, a graduate of Trinity College, made his generous gift of 150 Bibles in 1933, the Annual Report noted that ‘many of these are books which the Library had long given up hope of acquiring’.

His gift included many valuable and unusual Bibles, but perhaps the most outstanding was the rare ‘Gutenberg’ Bible. Only 50 copies of this edition survive, and not all of them are complete. Printed anonymously at Mainz about 1455 by the inventor of printing in Western Europe, Johann Gutenberg, along with Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer, this monumental work represents a remarkable advance in technology. Also known as the ‘42-line Bible’ because each page has two columns of text with 42 lines to a

column, it was the first substantial book printed from movable metal type. The design allowed for human artistry, however; spaces were left on the printed pages so coloured hand-lettering and ornament could be added. This particular copy has an additional importance in that it is notable for markings made in a Strassburg printing house around 1469, when it was used as copy for a later edition produced by Heinrich Eggstein. It is one of only two dozen or so examples of 15th-century printer's copy to survive – an exceptionally rare document of early printing practices.

## **Technology's inexorable advance**

Time and technology refuse to stand still. Some five centuries later Johann Gutenberg would probably have been amazed to learn that the Bible he so ‘swiftly’ printed was translated into 1,300 digital photographic images by a team from Keio University, Japan, in just four days. Their equipment included a ‘one-shot’ super-high-definition digital camera and a special cradle with low-



Gutenberg Bible: Jerome's Epistle.

pressure page support. These digital facsimiles mean that Gutenberg's Bible can now be admired and studied all over the world via the internet.

Through the Library's effective use of the very latest technology, even the earliest printed items can be made available to meet 21st-century international scholarly needs and practices. The Library has a programme to create digital images from its collections, so that they can be made more widely accessible. These images will be stored in a digital repository called DSpace@Cambridge. This is a ground-breaking venture, managed by the Library and the University Computing Service and initially funded through a grant from the Cambridge-MIT Institute as a collaboration with MIT Libraries and Hewlett-Packard Laboratories. DSpace is designed to have the ability to capture, index, store, disseminate and preserve digital materials created in any part of the University. The Library is leading the work to develop further the digital preservation capabilities of the

system and support for virtual learning environments, and is planning the use of DSpace as a service to the University and beyond.

Once again the nature of 'the materials of learning' is being transformed, widening access to rare and fragile archives and enlarging the Library's user community.

It is salutary to contemplate, however, that in another 500 years (indeed in another 50!) today's state-of-the-art technology may be totally incomprehensible to the readers of the future. They will, however, still recognise and delight in the nature of Johann Gutenberg's creation, and its millions of companions that line the Library's shelves – the book.



Gutenberg Bible: Prologue to Isaiah.

## Some significant dates in the Library's history

### c.1278

Nigel de Thornton gives the University land on which the Schools (the first University buildings) would be built

### 1416

Two wills contain the first mention of a University Library

### c.1420–1438

Building of the western range of the Schools with the Library in its upper storey

### 1424

The Library's first catalogue (now in the University Archives)

### 1473

The Library's second catalogue, listing 330 volumes

### c.1475

Completion of the eastern range of the Schools, with Library above, at the expense of Thomas Rotherham, Archbishop of York

### 1574

Notable gifts from Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Sir Nicholas Bacon

### 1581

Theodore Beza sends from Geneva his 5th-century manuscript of the Gospels and Acts in Greek and Latin, now famous as the Codex Bezae

### 1632

The Duchess of Buckingham presents the collection of Arabic and other manuscripts formed by Thomas Erpenius of Leiden

### 1647

Lambeth Palace Library granted to Cambridge (but returned after the Restoration)

### 1664

The library of Richard Holdsworth, Master of Emmanuel College, containing 10,000 volumes, adjudged to the University

### 1710

The Library's privilege of legal deposit confirmed under the Copyright Act

### 1715

King George I presents the renowned library of John Moore, Bishop of Ely, subsequently known as the Royal Library

### 1867

The distinguished collector and scholar Henry Bradshaw appointed Librarian

### 1894

Death of Samuel Sandars, one of the Library's greatest benefactors

### 1898

Arrival of the Taylor-Schechter fragments from the Cairo *genizah*

### 1933

The bequest of AW Young, including a copy of the Gutenberg Bible

### 1934

Move of the Library from the Old Schools site to its present building designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott

### 1993

Acquisition of the collections of the Royal Commonwealth Society after a public appeal

### 2000

Purchase of the Macclesfield Collection of scientific papers, including manuscripts by Sir Isaac Newton

### 2003

New Legal Deposit Libraries Act extends legal deposit to include electronic materials

### 2005

Completion of the penultimate stage of the Library's current building programme

## Acknowledgments

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Front cover: The Schools Quadrangle, showing Rotherham's eastern front, with the original University Library above.

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Photograph of Sir David Attenborough by Cliff Kent, courtesy of Rex Features; Photograph of Dame Gillian Beer by Michael Cameron; Photograph of Stephen Fry by Johnny Boylan; Photograph of Dame Julia Neuberger by Derek Tamea.