

Special Collections Access Policy

1. Introduction

The University of Manchester Library holds the second most significant university library special collections in the UK after the University of Oxford.

Our mission is to manage, develop and enhance access to our astonishing special collections, in order to inspire and nurture world-class research, teaching and learning at The University of Manchester and in the wider world of scholarship. We also promote the use and enjoyment of the collections by diverse audiences, in fulfilment of the vision of Enriqueta Rylands.

This policy explains how the University of Manchester Library provides access to its special collections in line with professional best practices and relevant legislation. The University of Manchester Library Special Collections consists of several categories of material: rare books and maps; archives and manuscripts; and visual collections.

2. Our community

The University of Manchester Special Collections serves the following communities both on-site and remotely:

- University of Manchester staff and students
- Academics and students of other institutions both national and international
- Independent Scholars
- The general public including local and family historians, private and commercial researchers
- Visitors to The John Rylands Library
- Donors and depositors of collections and their heirs and representatives
- Virtual audiences,

3. Special Collections Access

- The majority of the Special Collections are held at The [John Rylands Library](#) on Deansgate Road in the centre of Manchester. It is open from 10-5 Monday to Saturday (opening till 7pm on Thursdays) and provides seating for 25 readers.
- Other collections are held at the [Main Library](#) on the Oxford Road campus. These include the archives of the University of Manchester, Christian Brethren Archives, the Map Collection, many scientific and medical archives, and post-1800 medical books.
- The reading rooms are open to adults (16-17 year olds can access the collections in the company of a parent, guardian or other adult). All readers are asked to fill in a membership form prior to using the reading room. This can be completed remotely or during the first visit. Two forms of ID, one with a photograph and one with a printed proof of address should be provided. University of Manchester staff and students need only to produce their student card.
- We aim to make the reading rooms accessible to all. Both reading rooms are within accessible buildings. The Library has lifts to all floors, automatic doors and adapted

toilets.

- Library works with the University's [Disability Advisory and Support Service](#) to support customers with accessibility needs. Library staff aim to ensure that customers with additional support requirements are able to make full use of Library facilities. The AccessAble site can be consulted for information on all Library sites. <https://manchester-uk.libanswers.com/faq/192847>
- We recommend that readers contact us in advance of visits with any questions regarding specific requirements or adjustments that may be needed to enable use of the reading room. Further information can be found on our website pages.

[How do I access the Special Collections?](#)

[Using the Reading Room at The John Rylands Library](#)

[Using Special Collections at the Main Library](#)

[Using the Special Collections Reading Rooms](#)

4. Making our collections available

- We are committed to making our collections as accessible and discoverable as possible.
- The vast majority of Special Collections printed books are recorded in [Library Search](#).
- Detailed catalogues of many of our archive collections are available through our [online catalogue, ELGAR](#) (Electronic Gateway to Archives at the Rylands), which is a microsite of the [Archives Hub](#).
- A small number of archives which are not on Elgar have online catalogues hosted by [The National Archives' Discovery website](#). [under Manchester University: University of Manchester Library]
- Some archives only have hard-copy catalogues which are only available in the Reading Rooms.
- The [Guide to Special Collections](#) provides an overview of most of our collections. [The Special Collections A to Z list](#) gives a brief summary of contents and references to online catalogues and other sources of information. There are also finding aids in the Reading room Rooms which can be consulted.

5. Archive production

- We offer a closed-access reader service which means that items should be pre-ordered at least 24 hours in advance to ensure that they are ready for use on arrival or that we can communicate any issues prior to a visit. Some items which are uncatalogued or are governed by legislation, in particular the Data Protection Act 2018 (which incorporates the General Data Protection Regulation), may require more advanced

notice and this is communicated with the researcher upon initial request. Items are then retrieved by staff and issued in the Reading Rooms.

- Special Collections items will be issued to you at the Issue Desk. For security reasons one volume, file or one bundle of documents will be issued at a time.
- All users are required to adhere to the rules for accessing and handling the collections, copies of which are displayed on desks in the Reading Rooms.
- Staff will help with providing support in using documents and we will provide book-rests, weights, magnifying glasses and nitrile gloves as appropriate.

We can also provide more specialist equipment including a microscope, fibre-optic light sheet and a UV lamp.

6. Restrictions on access

- Although most collections are freely accessible within the reading room, we are committed to safeguarding the material we hold and to abide by certain statutory or legal requirements, notably the Data Protection Act 2018, the Freedom of Information Act 2000. We must also give proper consideration to issues of confidentiality and to the rights of owners, copyright holders and others. Where restrictions apply to collections, or part of collections, this will be identified within the catalogue.
- Archives consist largely of unpublished material, and most unpublished documents remain in copyright until at least 2039. This means that there are restrictions on how the contents of most archives can be used and reproduced by researchers.
- All users sign a declaration agreeing to abide by the General Data Protection regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 when registering and prior to using any collection regardless of whether or not any Data Protection issues have been identified both to protect the rights of owners and make them aware of their responsibilities when using collections.
- If requests are made to view uncatalogued material, the relevant archivist will be consulted. Where practical, they will assess the collection to see whether access restrictions should apply. This can take a period of time which will be communicated to the enquirer.
- Items may be restricted if they have been deemed too fragile and require conservation treatment. Where possible, a digital surrogate will be made available.
- If a surrogate item exists, we would expect this to be used by readers and staff in the first instance. Digital surrogates without copyright restrictions can be accessed both remotely and in the reading room. and images can be used under the [Creative Commons Licence- Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

7. Enquiries

- During our opening times, staff are able to help with enquiries about the collections, how to use the catalogues and support visitors in requesting relevant material. We respond to

enquiries by telephone, email and letter as well as in the reading room.

- Staff are able to help with basic research enquires; for more in-depth enquiries, we are able to provide enquirer with a list of relevant professionals and groups who may be approached by private individuals to undertake research work on an enquirer's behalf. Any arrangements made are a private matter between an individual or researcher and we do not accept any responsibility.

8. Photography and Imaging Service

- Where there are no restrictions on a collection, readers may use their own camera, mobile phone or tablet to make copies within the reading room. All readers using self-service photography are required to sign a form which outlines their responsibility regarding copyright and end-use.
- Readers are directed to our [Imaging Services](#) pages on our website for advice and information on requesting images for other use. Images can be ordered remotely and the pages provide information regarding end use and prices etc.

9. Online Access

- The Library has an ambitious digitisation programme in place to develop remote access to the collections, through the ongoing development of [Manchester Digital Collections](#). This supports the University of Manchester's mission to advance education, knowledge and wisdom for the good of society.
- Access to our digital collections is free via our website and images are discoverable through our high quality metadata which conforms to international standards.
- Our publicly accessible digitised collections are available for re-use and adaptation under a Creative Commons Licence: [Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\)](#).

10. Promoting our collections

Teaching

- Throughout the academic year, Curators and archivists collaborate with various faculty departments to support research and teaching and learning, and to promote the use of collections.
- Every two years the Special Collections teaching and learning group holds an evening event for academics at The John Rylands Library introducing a range of special collections and innovative teaching and learning case studies to encourage more tutors to build special collections into their modules and assessments.
- We host annually MA placement students from Liverpool University Archive courses and the University of Manchester Institute for Cultural Practices course who often work on collections within the Reading Rooms. This allows further access to more of our

collections, enhancing discoverability through cataloguing and blog posts.

- Our education programme aims to inspire school and college students from the Greater Manchester region with unique learning experiences using our Victorian Gothic building and outstanding collections of rare books and archives. Workshops and tours are free and are available for groups from KS2 to KS5. There are also classes for post-16 workshops and resources for self-guided groups.

John Rylands Research Institute (JRRI)

Curators collaborate closely with researchers at the [John Rylands Research Institute](#) who open up Special Collections to innovative and multidisciplinary research, in partnership with colleagues in Manchester and across the globe

Through collaborations with established academics, and supporting researchers th JRRI work towards the common goal of opening up the Special Collections to a more diverse audience through new and innovative research supported by external grant capture.

Exhibitions

Two major exhibitions of original material per year are presented at The John Rylands Library in the Cross Corridor. These are accompanied by a diverse programme of events, talks and activities, developed by the Visitor Engagement Team.

In our Rylands Gallery, material is chosen by the various curators to showcase material from the diverse collections. These are loosely based around the themes of everyday life, science, world religion and the art and craft of the book, etc. Admission to the exhibitions is free and is open daily to the public, including Sundays.

We promote exhibitions and events on our website and through social media activities including short videos and blog posts. Our marketing team works with other Manchester Cultural institutions and nationally.

We collaborate in external exhibitions, both national and international through curatorship and loans. Our loans policy can be accessed [here](#).

Publications

Since 1903 the [Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library](#), a refereed academic journal, has published scholarly articles on the Library, its collections and associated subjects.

[Riches of the Rylands: The Special Collections of the University of Manchester Library](#) (2015) is lavishly illustrated and features over 150 key items from the collections.

Web pages

Extensive information on our collections, services and visiting is made available through our [web pages](#). We constantly review the pages to ensure they are up to date and contain the most relevant material. There will be a major review of the library website later in 2020.

Social Media

Collection access and information is promoted through our [blog pages](#), Twitter account and Instagram account which also provide news about acquisitions, exhibitions and events and other collection-related topics.

11. Customer care and consultation

Reading room staff treat all readers and enquirers with courtesy and help to provide a welcoming environment for research. Staff receive regular training in order to support readers and we regularly review our policies and procedures. Complaints are dealt with promptly and appropriately.

Feedback is gathered from different stakeholder groups to improve our services and we take part in the Public Service Quality Group user's survey.

Consultancy and feedback of readers has been used to inform development the recent refurbishment of the Reading Room to provide a more comfortable and secure reader service. Feedback after the refurbishment has been collected and we also took part in alongside the ARA Public Service Quality Group distance user survey (2019) to collect feedback from enquirers who have not used the reading room.

Generic feedback forms are available in the reading room so that all visitors have the opportunity to comment on our services. We also obtain feedback from teaching sessions, Library staff workshops, and education sessions and from visitors.