The Chinese Special Collection of
John Rylands Library

By Xiaomei Holder
History of the John Rylands Library

http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/specialcollections/

- Built in 1889
- In memory of John Rylands
- Lavishly decorated in Gothic style
- Spencer & Crawford Collections are the early foundations
St. John fragment
http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/specialcollections/collections/stjohnfragment

• Less than 9cm high
• Papyrus Manuscript
• Discovered in Egypt originally
• Dated early 2nd Century A.D
• Earliest known fragment of the New Testament in any language
Chinese Special Collection
http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/specialcollections/collections/guide/atoz/chinese/

- 500 items
- Acquired in 1901 with Crawford Collection
- Originally purchased from the Library of Pierre Leopold van Alstein in 1863
- Most dated 18th & 19th C
- 28 items are dated before 1600
European Connection

- Early study notes of European sinologists
- Some associated with French sinologist, Jean Pierre Abel Rémusat (d 1832).
Different styles of binding
Chinese Diploma dated 1835 A.D.
文寿衢歌乐商
（2 scrolls, no date, a busy street preparing for Kang Xi’s 60th birthday）
Extended Chinese Collection

Tibetan Manuscripts
- 15 items
- Collection mostly includes ritual texts and prayer-wheels.
- MS 6 and MS 14 are the most remarkable items

Moso Collection
- 135 items
- Second largest Mo-So collection in Europe
- Acquired between 1916 and 1920 from the botanist George Forrest (lived in Lijiang)
- Performance of secret ritual ceremonies
Potential projects

Evaluation
• The whole collection has only been grossly utilised so far
• Experts needed for a thorough evaluation

Cataloguing
• Online open access catalogue needed for both manuscripts and printed books

Digitisation
• Our current image collection on *luna Insight*
• Digitising Chinese Manuscripts
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