

The Monash University Library Rare Books Collection contains materials that are considered rare and in need of special care because of their age, uniqueness or physical beauty.

The Rare Books Collection was founded in 1961 – the year Monash University opened – when the University Librarian purchased a collection of early edition works by Jonathan Swift and some of his contemporaries. There are now over 150,000 items in the collection.

While the scope of the collection is very broad and reflects many aspects of human endeavour, the collection is particularly strong in English literature and history produced between 1660 and 1800 and Australiana.

## Collection areas

### Art and photography

Fragile and valuable items relating to art and photography, including a large collection of artists' books and a collection of Chinese propaganda posters dating from the Cultural Revolution.

### Australiana

Materials relating to Australia, Australian literature and history; includes First Fleet journals and explorers' accounts.

### Books on books

Materials about the history of books, dating from the 17th century to the present day. Covering all aspects of book production, selling and readership.

### Children's books

The Lindsay Shaw Collection of children's books from England and Australia contains about 10,000 titles, mostly from the 19th and 20th centuries.

### Comics

Comics from the 1930s to the present, mainly Australian material.

### Cookery and household management books

Materials include French and English cookery books from the 18th century, as well as English and Australian material from the 19th century to the present day.

### English literature and history

English literature and history dating from the 15th century to the present day. There is a strong focus on material produced between 1660 and 1800.

### French literature

A wide range of French literature dating from the 17th and 18th centuries.

### Manuscripts

Materials include a small collection of 18th century manuscripts by Jonathan Swift and contemporaries; French material, and recipe books. There is also a collection of Indonesian palm-leaf and Batak books.

### Medical books

Materials include the former rare book collection of the Australian Medical Association; the library of Dr Richard Travers; early Australian material; fringe medicine; the Goller collection of AIDS material; 18th and 19th century forensic medicine.

### Pamphlets

Political, theological and literary pamphlets from the 17th century to the present day. This includes a large collection of Restoration and 18th century plays.

### Popular culture

Yellowbacks and pulp novels as well as ephemera, reflecting aspects of everyday life from the 19th century to the present.

### Science Fiction

American science fiction magazines dating from the 1920s to 1950s. Magazines include *Fantastic Adventures*, *Amazing Stories*, *Startling Stories* and *Other Worlds*.

### Travel

Travel accounts and guides dating from the 18th and 19th centuries. Materials include a collection of Baedeker and Murray's guide books and some manuscript accounts.

Cover: *The Solemn mock procession of the Pope, Cardinals, Jesuits, Fryers etc. through the City of London, November the 17th, 1680*, London, 1680 [detail]



# Services and facilities

## Specialist staff

The Rare Books Collection is staffed by a team of specialists with expertise in finding and using rare books information. They can help you make the best use of the resources.

## Information desk and reading room

To use an item from the collection, make a request at the Rare Books information desk. Materials in the collection are in need of special care and can only be viewed in the Rare Books reading room.

The light-filled room contains several reading tables which will accommodate a range of materials including posters and large format books. Photocopying or scanning may be arranged, depending on the condition of the book.

## Exhibitions

Several exhibitions featuring fragile and valuable materials from the Rare Books Collection are hosted each year in the Sir Louis Matheson Library. These exhibitions enable the library to share a wide variety of rare items with scholars, students and the general public, exposing the depth of the collection.

To learn more about exhibitions at the library and view virtual exhibitions, visit:

[www.lib.monash.edu/exhibitions](http://www.lib.monash.edu/exhibitions)

## Website

The Rare Books Collection has an extensive website which complements and extends in-house services. Through the Rare Books Collection web pages, you can discover some of the highlights of the collection online. The website also provides links to other rare book collections around Australia.

[www.lib.monash.edu/rare](http://www.lib.monash.edu/rare)

## Rare Books Collection

Sir Louis Matheson Library  
Level 1, ISB Wing  
Building 4  
Clayton campus  
Monash University, Victoria 3800  
Australia

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Fax: +61 3 9905 9070

[www.lib.monash.edu/rare](http://www.lib.monash.edu/rare)

## Opening hours

Monday – Wednesday 9 am – 5 pm  
Thursday 9 am – 8 pm (during semester)  
Friday 9 am – 5 pm

## Rare Books Librarian

Richard Overell  
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