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Livingstone Letter from the John Rylands Library (17 February 2009)

The John Rylands Library (now the [John Rylands University Library](#), [The University of Manchester](#)) was founded as a memorial to the industrialist John Rylands (1801-1888) by his third wife Henriqueta Rylands (1843-1908). The building is a much admired example of Victorian Gothic architecture and has recently re-opened following a £16 million



Historic Reading Room of the John Rylands Library, Deansgate, Manchester.

Credit: Reproduced by courtesy of the University Librarian and Director, The John Rylands University Library, The University of Manchester.

redevelopment. Its collections include probably the oldest known piece of the New Testament, the St John Fragment. Other treasures include a 1476 William Caxton edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, thought to be the first book printed in England.

The Library possesses [one letter from David Livingstone](#) in its Thomas Raffles Collection. The letter was written by Livingstone at Birkenhead and dated 6 March 1858. Livingstone was about to return to Africa as head of the 'Zambesi Expedition'. Thomas Raffles (1788-1863) was an eminent Congregationalist minister in Liverpool. He was also a collector of autographs. In the letter Livingstone relates that he has 'African fever' and excuses himself from meeting Raffles that evening.

