

Appendix C
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John Rylands Library Work Experience Report

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I began organisation of the work experience when I expressed interest to photographer James Robinson. James had briefly explained to me the purpose and working scheme of the library, and as a student about to embark on the final year of a BA Honours course in photography, I decided this would be a good opportunity for me to discover what work could be available after my graduation. I was aware that James photographed manuscripts and various book collections, but did not fully appreciate the extent of the collections or the digitizing projects, until my visit.

Upon arrival I was taken through the building and introduced to all the staff working in every area of the library. Everyone I met, kindly took the time to explain what they were doing, and patiently answered any questions I had to ask.

The photographers happened to be attending a training session in book handling, in which I was allowed to participate. Previously I had not known the specific requirements for book handling. Although I had a basic idea, this was only based on common sense. However, my common sense was proved wrong, underlining just how precise and attentive the handling process really is. This was greatly stressed at the training session, and the photographers seemed to really understand the importance of the information they were given. I was very impressed at the genuine care for the work being undertaken, and the enthusiasm from all the staff.

I was taken around the building by James, and he explained all of the resources available and gave me a brief history of the library. I was not aware of the extent of collections housed in the library, and was very pleased to know that students had access to study in such an environment. The University where I study does not offer resources like the ones given here in Manchester, and so I really appreciated this. I spent some time observing James carry out some digitization work on a Persian manuscript, the *Shahnama*. Every step was explained to me in detail. I then took over from him, to gain a practical understanding of his work. From this, I learned several skills to meet specific requirements for working on such material. Again, I was fascinated to learn of the intricate attention to detail required when undertaking this work.

Although I did not have a great knowledge or understanding of the library prior to my work experience, I cannot blame this on inadequate publicity as I live and study a considerable distance from Manchester. However, I would hope schools and other Universities are well informed of its existence.

My overall experience was greatly rewarding. I was hugely impressed by the commitment from staff and the genuine appreciation of the library and everything it holds. I left the day inspired and motivated, grateful of my experience and furthered knowledge of such a worthwhile resource. I hope to return in the near future to discover more, and offer help where I can.