

Oldest privately owned book sells for £3mn at UK sale

June 11 2024



The Crosby-Schoyen Codex is one of the earliest books in existence.

The world's oldest book in a private collection, and one of the earliest books in existence, sold at auction in London on Tuesday for more than £3 million.

The Crosby-Schoyen Codex was previously owned by the Norwegian businessman and rare book collector Martin Schoyen, and contains the earliest complete copies of two texts from the Bible—the book of Jonah and Peter's first epistle.

Bidding for the text at Christie's auction house started at £1.7 million for a mix of enthusiastic online and in-person bidders.

It sold for £3,065,000 (\$3,898,000) including taxes to an anonymous phone bidder.

The codex was discovered by Egyptian farmers in the 1950s.

It was originally copied by a monk in what is now Egypt around the fourth century AD, making it at least 1,600 years old and far older than more renowned ancient texts such as the Gutenberg Bible, which dates from the 1450s.

Written in Coptic script on double-sided papyrus leaves now preserved between plexiglass plates, the ancient biblical text represents advances in written technology at a time when single-sided scrolls were more commonplace.

Twelve additional select pieces from the Schoyen Collection also went up for [auction](#) alongside the literary jewel.

The entire collection comprises over 20,000 pieces, spanning 5,000 years of history from 3,500 BC to the present day, according to its website.

Although impressive, the sale is far from the highest selling price for a rare text.

Last year, the Codex Sassoon—a Hebrew Bible more than 1,000 years

old—sold for \$38.1 million at Sotheby's in New York in a new record.

That surpassed the \$30.8 million that Microsoft founder Bill Gates paid in 1994 for Leonardo da Vinci's Codex Leicester manuscript.

The most expensive historical document remains one of the first prints of the US Constitution, which Sotheby's sold for \$43 million in November 2021.

© 2024 AFP

Citation: Oldest privately owned book sells for £3mn at UK sale (2024, June 11) retrieved 10 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-06-oldest-privately-3mn-uk-sale.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.