

One of world's largest Korans reunited by technology

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Technology is to enable scholars for the first time to study a complete manuscript of one of the world's most important and largest Korans.

The book's ornate 88 x 60 x 18 cm pages - the size of a plasma television - are kept at The University of Manchester's John Rylands Library.

Experts at the John Rylands Library are using digital technology and the internet to reunite the 470 page Rylands Koran of Kansuh al-Ghuri with two missing leaves, discovered in the 1970s at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin.

Up to now, scholars have been unable to study the precious items - thought to be at least 500 years old - because they are too fragile.

But now, the reunited digitised resource will be freely available for research, teaching and learning using Turning the Pages technology on a dedicated website.

At least 950 images will be captured - which will be between 80 and 120 MB each - allowing their study in intricate detail. The Chester Beatty Library

will supervise the digitisation of the two separated leaves.

The project has been funded by The Islamic Manuscript Association - an international non-profit organisation dedicated to protecting Islamic manuscript collections and supporting people who work with them.

Project manager Carol Burrows who is Collection and Research Support Manager at The John Rylands Library said: "We aim to create and publish a digital facsimile of this important manuscript to make it accessible to anyone with an interest in the Koran.

"Because of its size and weight, reading room access has been severely restricted to all but a handful of scholars. It cannot be used in exhibitions, seminars or public close-ups.

"It will certainly be challenging to photograph this enormous manuscript, as it is too large and heavy for the equipment we normally use.

"However, we have constructed dedicated equipment which will achieve this aim."

"Historians disagree on when the Koran was written- ranging from 1500 to the second half of the 14th century.

"Analysis of digital images should aid scholars to date the manuscript more accurately."

Dr Andreas Christmann, Senior Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University's school of Arts, Histories and Cultures said: "Although one of the biggest assets of the John Rylands Library, this Koran has not been available for either research or teaching because of its delicate state.

"We know it represents one of the finest, most lavishly illuminated and calligraphically significant

Qur'an [manuscripts](#) from the late Mamluk period

"Because of its time of writing - 14th or 15th century - it bridges the gap in chronicling Qur'anic calligraphy between the late classical period - 9th-12th century and the early modern period - 16th-18th century.

"By digitizing the entire manuscript and adding the missing chapters it will produce an almost complete Qur'anic manuscript of magnificent size and splendid craftsmanship.

"I'm delighted scholars, including students of my class in Qur'anic Studies, will have free access to studying this text, which will provide a great stimulus for further research into Qur'anic calligraphy."

More information: John Rylands photographer Jamie Robinson will be working in a dedicated space in the John Rylands Library to capture the images. He will be writing a blog specifically for the project gatewaytothekoran.wordpress.com/

Provided by University of Manchester

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