

Building and Researching Chinese Libraries: Preservation, Digitisation, and Dissemination

Celebrating 420 Years of Chinese Books at the Bodleian Libraries

Dates: 6-7 June (Thur-Fri), 2024

Venue: Weston Library, University of Oxford

Overview: Four hundred and twenty years ago, in 1604, in the year of the dragon, the founder of the Bodleian Library in Oxford, Sir Thomas Bodley acquired his first Chinese book for his Library, laying the foundation for the Chinese collections in Oxford. Sir Thomas acknowledged the donor who made his acquisition possible by writing the donor's name and the date on the end paper of the book, but without knowing that he was holding the Chinese book in wrong order and upside down. The book was a partial copy of the popular Confucian essentials, known as '*Four Books*' (四書). By the time of his death in 1613, Sir Thomas acquired 49 volumes of Chinese books, which was likely to be the largest such collection in Europe at the time. In fact, a quarter of all Chinese books arrived in Europe in the 17th century are currently held in the Bodleian Library. Today, Bodleian Libraries holds one of the finest and most important Chinese rare book and manuscript collections in Europe and the largest Chinese collection in the UK.



Figure 1 Sir Thomas Bodley (1545-1613)

2024 is also a year of the dragon and it is the seventh *jiazi* year (甲子年, 60-year cycle in Chinese calendar) since the first Chinese book was acquired by the Bodleian in 1604. 2024 is also the 10th anniversary year of the opening of the KB Chen China Centre Library. The Bodleian Library, joined by the TEXTCOURT project, are holding international conference to celebrate the 420th year of the Chinese book in Bodleian Libraries. The conference focuses on the history of collecting Chinese books and its digitisation, dissemination, and conservation, as well as digital humanities and research approaches related to Chinese collections. You are

warmly invited to join us at the conference to celebrate the special occasion and learn about the remarkable stories of Chinese collections and digital projects, view Bodleian Library's precious treasures, and enjoy many more activities in the Weston Library on 6-7 June 2024.

Acknowledgement

We extend our sincere thanks to the **Chung Hon Dak Fund** and the **European Research Council (ERC)** for their generous support. This conference is a collaborative effort between the East Asian Section of the Bodleian Libraries, sponsored by the Chung Hon Dak Fund, and the "TEXTCOURT: Linking the Textual Worlds of Chinese Court Theater, ca. 1600-1800" project, which has received funding from the ERC under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 819953). Their invaluable support has made this enriching gathering possible, allowing us to delve into significant aspects of Chinese cultural heritage.

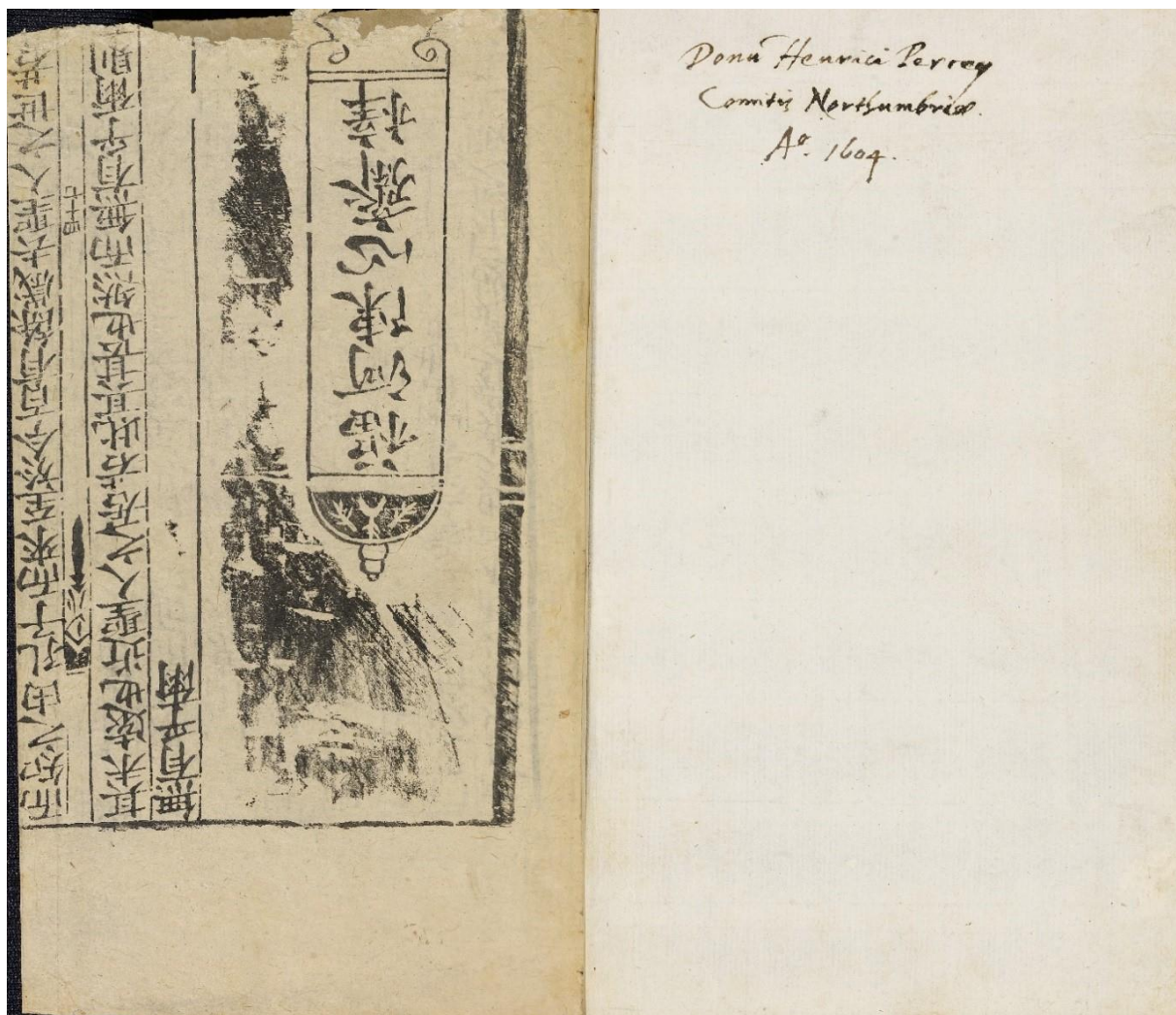


Figure 2 Four Books 新刻相臺分章旁註四書正文 (明萬曆刻本)

Featured Events:

- 1) **Keynote Speech by Prof. Wilt L. Idema:** Delve into 'The Perfect Chinese Library: Some Thoughts of an Impatient User,' as Prof. Idema explores the evolving demands and future directions of Chinese library services. Gain insights from the perspective of a seasoned scholar who navigates the complexities and potential of modern libraries.
- 2) **Four Panels Covering Diverse Topics:** From ancient manuscripts to modern digital archives, leading experts will discuss their pioneering research and ground-breaking findings. Highlights include:
 - Digitalization of Court Drama Scripts
 - Building Special Collections for Chinese Studies
 - Conservation Techniques for Rare Manuscripts
 - Case Studies from Leading Chinese libraries

Session Formats and Languages:

- Panel 1: Presentations in English and Mandarin Chinese.
- Panel 2-3: Presentations in English.
- Panel 4: Presentations in Mandarin Chinese
- Each presentation is approximately 15 minutes long.

Note: The event features both English and Mandarin Chinese presentations. Please refer to the individual panel descriptions for specific language details.

Audience: Open to public

Distinguished Speakers and Their Insights:

Keynote Speaker:



- **Prof. Wilt L. Idema**

*Professor of Chinese Literature emeritus,
Harvard University*

- **Title of Presentation:**

"The Perfect Chinese Library: Some Thoughts
of an Impatient User"

Panel 1: Innovations in the Digitisation and Preservation of Chinese Cultural Heritage (Presentations in English and Mandarin Chinese)

Chair: Prof. YANG Yuliang

Time and Date: 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM, June 6, 2024

• **Prof. Tian Yuan Tan**

- Institution: University of Oxford
- Title of Presentation: "TEXTCOURT: Digitising and Researching Chinese Court Drama Scripts and Related Foreign Records"

• **Dr. NGUYEN To Lan**

- Institution: Institute of Philosophy at Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences Department at the Institute of Sino-Nom Studies)
- Title of Presentation: "Connecting, Digitalizing, and Sharing: Building a Cross-Institution Platform for Classic Chinese Manuscripts in Vietnam"

• **Prof. WANG Jia (王嘉)**

- Institution: Beijing Foreign Studies University
- Title of Presentation: "Exploring the Possibilities of Studying Early 20th Century Vietnamese Quoc Ngu Texts through Digital Research Methods (借助数字化研究方法研究 20 世纪初期越南国语字文本的几种可能性)"

Panel 2: Curating and Digitising Chinese Heritage: Global Perspective on Special Collections

Chair: Dr. Ming Tak Ted Hui

Time and Date: 14:00 PM - 15:30 PM, June 6, 2024

• **Dr. Peter Zhou (周欣平)**

- Institution: C.V. Starr East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley
- Title of Presentation: "Building Special Collections for Chinese Studies at the C V Star East Asian Library, University of California, Berkeley"

- **Dr. SIM Chuin Peng**

- Institution: National University of Singapore

- Title of Presentation: "Unveiling Treasures: The Dissemination of Special Collections from the Wan Boo Sow Chinese Library at the National University of Singapore"

- **Prof. Donald Sturgeon**

- Institution: Durham University

- Title of Presentation: "Enhancing a Digital Library of Premodern Chinese through Crowdsourcing and AI"

Panel 3: Advancing and Preservation of Chinese Rare Books and Manuscripts

Chair: Prof. Tian Yuan Tan

Time and Date: 15:50 PM - 16:40 PM, June 6, 2024

- **Virginia Lladó-Buisán**

- Institution: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

- Title of Presentation: To be confirmed

- **Dr. Mamtimyn Sunuodula**

- Institution: Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

- Title of Presentation: "Making Meaning of Chinese Old Books: A Community Perspective"

Panel 4: Case studies and innovations in Chinese Library Practices (Presentations in Mandarin Chinese)

Chair: Dr. Mamtimyn Sunuodula

Time and Date: 9:00 AM - 11:30 AM, June 7, 2024

- **Dr. SUI Jun (睚駿)**

- Institution: Fudan University (复旦大学)

- Title of Presentation: "Review and Prospects of Rare Book Digitization Work at Fudan University Library (复旦大学图书馆古籍数字化回顾与展望)"

• **Dr. YANG Guanghui (楊光輝)**

• Institution: Fudan University (复旦大学)

• Title of Presentation: " On the Remnants of the Ming Dynasty Wanli Fujian Edition of the Four Books in the Collection of the Bodleian Library of the Oxford (牛津大学图书馆藏明万历福建刻《四书》残本考)"

• **HUANG Chen (黃晨)**

• Institution: Zhejiang University (浙江大学)

• Title of Presentation: " A Case Study on Special Ancient Book Preservation Efforts at Zhejiang University (浙江大学古籍特藏工作交流)"

Day 1: 6th June 2024 (Thu)

Itinerary of Conference

Time	Activity	Venue
09:10-09:30	Coffee + registration	Blackwell hall
09:30-09:45	Opening	Lecture Theatre
09:45-10:45	Keynote	Lecture Theatre
10:45-11:00	Coffee break	Blackwell hall
11:00-12:30	Panel 1	Lecture Theatre
14:00-15:30	Panel 2	Lecture Theatre
15:30-15:45	Coffee break	Blackwell hall
15:45-16:30	Panel 3	Lecture Theatre

Day 2: 7th June 2024 (Fri)

Time	Activity	Venue
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09:00-09:30	Coffee	Blackwell hall
09:30-11:00	Panel 4 (Presentations in Mandarin Chinese)	Lecture Theatre
11:00-11:30	Closing Remarks	Lecture Theatre
11:30-12:00	Book Donation Ceremony: <i>The Comprehensive Collection of Ancient Chinese Paintings</i> by Zhejiang University Press	Lecture Theatre