The Haddon Library stands as one of the UK’s foremost research collections of published material in the social sciences and humanities.

Founded by the pioneering anthropologist Alfred Haddon in 1920, it has amassed a remarkable collection of highly valuable resources, with 62,000 books, pamphlets and periodical volumes gathered over nearly 90 years.

The Haddon's initial holdings comprised historic collections from the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. Over the years, these have been enriched by the benefaction of various donors, including eminent anthropologists such as Sir James Frazer, James Hornell, Wynfrid Duckworth and William Rivers.

The Haddon holds an extensive collection of offprints gathered by the Victorian archaeologist Augustus Pitt-Rivers; the libraries of the distinguished prehistorians Charles McBurney and Grahame Clark; and an exhaustive holding of books and journals on human evolution.

The Library houses the books and many English and foreign journals of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, collected since the 1840s. These include fascinating material on the history of Cambridge city and University – a significant resource for both the professional historian and the enthusiastic amateur.

“They are the books, the arts, the academes, That show, contain and nourish all the world”

Shakespeare, Love’s Labour’s Lost
In pursuit of knowledge

Recent acquisitions by the Haddon continue to reveal the depth and breadth of human history, spanning the esoteric and the idiosyncratic, the superstitious and the practical.

From oracle bone inscriptions of ancient Chinese writing to social relations between the living and dead in an English village; from dental perspectives on our evolution to how humans during the Upper Palaeolithic Age got their five-a-day, the Haddon is the source of enlightening information on human development across time and place.

Encouraging learning

The Haddon provides outstanding support for the teaching and research needs of the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. It also promotes our relationship with the past and the dissemination of such knowledge by welcoming researchers from other universities across the world, and visits from the general public, free of charge.

The future of the Haddon

At a very special moment in the University’s history – the celebration of 800 years of academic excellence – the Haddon Library has set itself a mission. This is to actively seek the benefaction of alumni and well-wishers so that the Library can continue providing pivotal support to academic scholarship far into the 21st century and beyond.

The Library aims to ensure that its outstanding collections are kept up-to-date through acquisitions of new books, periodicals and journals, and to guarantee the safety of rare and valuable holdings by modernising its security system. It also seeks to improve facilities for readers by providing contemporary, comfortable seating – a prerequisite for long hours of study! – and coin-operated lockers to keep personal belongings safe.

The generosity of benefactors would enable the Library to greatly enhance its services to teaching and research in Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge. The proper preservation and expansion of the Haddon’s collections are vital to our engagement with the past so that we may understand and shape the direction of our future.

“What thinking back to Cambridge again, getting out old dusty books at Haddon library, always reminds me how much I love research.”

Thandie Newton, actor, in The Guardian

How you can help the Haddon

- Sponsor a new book for £25
- Keep a book safe and sound for £5
- Give a reader a comfortable seat for £120
- Provide a locker for £60

These are only some of the ways you can contribute to the Haddon’s evolution into a library responsive to the needs of the 21st century.

For more information, contact

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