History of the Jesuit Community’s Rare Book Fund

When he was rector of the Jesuit Community, Rev. Michael Engh created a fund for the purchase of rare books relating to the history of the Society of Jesus (1996). The Department of Archives and Special Collections took this occasion to evaluate our holdings in this area, found ourselves sadly deficient, and began to build the Jesuit Collection aggressively. As LMU is the only Jesuit institution of higher learning in Southern California, we believe it is important for us to continue to develop this collection.

Since 1996, the Jesuit Community has been an unceasingly strong ally and generous supporter of our commitment to build a first-rate Jesuit Collection for the LMU Community, aiding us with continued gifts to the Jesuit Book Fund. Thanks to the Community’s support, we have been able to add significant rare Jesuit works to the Collection every year.

The primary goal of the Jesuit Collection is to build a representative collection of classic works by and about the Society of Jesus, to serve as teaching tools for Jesuit history, history of the book, and other class visit needs. Many of the books on display for you today are used frequently by classes. This year’s Undergraduate Research Symposium will include a presentation by a student who extensively researched our 17th century Jesuit editions on China.

In the past few years we have begun to add specific, extraordinary items to the collection in anticipation of a major gallery exhibition planned for 2022, in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the canonizations of Saints Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier. These acquisitions include the printed papal bull proclaiming Saint Ignatius’ beatification, the 1622 printed letter describing their canonization celebrations, and the unpublished manuscript of the life of Saint Francis Xavier. No other institution in the United States is known to have a copy of any of these. [The framed manuscript on loan from Liber Antiquus is similarly being considered as a one-of-a-kind purchase.] Thanks to your friendship and generosity, the Library’s holdings will be able to provide a magnificent display in honor of the occasion.