Everyone setting foot in the new extension of the historic John Rylands Library in Manchester will be enjoying the surroundings with added clarity, thanks to glazing from Pilkington.

The extension to the original building, which was built in 1900, features 512m² of the Pilkington Planar™ structural glazing system incorporating Pilkington Optiwhite™. Pilkington glass was used extensively in the exterior of the newly added structure, and also features in the interior in the stair balustrade within the atrium and the glass bridge which connects the new building with the old.

More than 300m² of 19mm toughened Pilkington Optiwhite™ and 100m² of 19.5 mm Pilkington Optiwhite™ laminate is used on the project. Insulated glass units (IGUs) in the atrium roof are made up of 10mm Pilkington Optiwhite™ with a 16mm cavity and internal laminate leaf of 13.5 mm Pilkington Optiwhite™. All glazing was fitted with Pilkington Planar™ Nexus cast stainless steel fittings and Pilkington Planar™ bolts.

Ian Cartwright, Managing Director of Bridgetown Developments Ltd, specialist contractors for the extension, said: “The new building is designed to promote learning. The emphasis has been placed on allowing the benefits of natural light to shine through, providing users with a more pleasant experience. It helps to create a bright and inspirational working area. The use of Pilkington Planar™ combined with Pilkington Optiwhite™ maximises the intake of natural light. It’s quite a contrast with the original building, which is gothic in style so naturally very dark inside, but they complement each other well.”

The extension and the refurbishment of the original building, which was built during the 1890s in memory of the cotton merchant John Rylands, has provided the library with a café, gift shop and new exhibition areas as well as improved wheelchair access. The library is part of the University of Manchester. Construction of the new building on Spinningfields, which began in 2004, has been made possible thanks to an £8.5 million pound grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and over £3 million from the European Union.

Ian concluded: “The John Rylands Library is instantly recognisable and one of Manchester’s most iconic buildings. This extension can help to make it more accessible and inviting to everyone and that can only benefit the city.”

Pilkington Planar™ allows architects to create a glass envelope for buildings, enabling support structures to be located internally or externally. The facade panels can be supplied in single toughened, laminated or insulated format depending on the performance requirements on the particular project. In addition, the versatility of the various facade systems is matched by a full range of stainless steel bolt fixings which have been designed with elegance and the necessary structural performance in mind. Pilkington Optiwhite™ increases the amount of visible light that can pass through the glass by reducing the iron content during the manufacturing process. Maximising natural light in the building alleviates the dependence on artificial light and reduces the amount of energy used in the library which in turn has a positive affect on the environment.

For further details on Pilkington Planar™ please see the website at
www.pilkington.com/planar
The Pilkington Planar™ System

- 512 m² of Pilkington Planar™ structural glazing.
  - Fitting technology: Nexus castings and 902 Planar bolts
  - Pilkington glass also used extensively on stair balustrades within the atrium and glass bridge connecting the new and old building.

Architects – Austin-Smith Lord
Installer – Bridgetown Developments