The first Islamic manuscript to enter the Library was a copy of the Qur’an donated in 1631 by the Arabic scholar William Bedwell. Since that time the Library’s Islamic manuscripts collection has grown in size and diversity to over 5,000 items. They shed a light on many aspects of the culture of the Islamic world, its beliefs and learning. Such a collection was amassed over subsequent centuries either from scholarly collectors or purchased by skilled librarians to add more depth to the already impressive range of treasures. But this extraordinary collection has remained relatively unknown outside the Library. Today, the aim is to change this with a number of different approaches. We are creating a fully searchable online catalogue of the manuscripts and digitising a selection of the most beautiful and interesting texts to make them available to the international scholarly community anywhere in the world via the internet. At the same time, the practical care of the original items, carried out by our own skilled conservators, will ensure their long-term survival for future generations. The Islamic manuscripts collection is supported within the Library by a team of specialists whose knowledge and skills, whether academic, practical or technical, aim to bring them to the attention of researchers. But only with a sustained programme of scholarly co-operation with experts outside the Library can the full content and significance of these texts be realised and their place in the wider context of Islamic scholarship become established.
Dissections, bones and a manikin as Cambridge University Library celebrates 600 years as one of the world's greatest literary institutions. Charles Robert Darwin and Francis Darwin, Manuscript page of On the Origin of Species; The Battle of the Fruits and Vegetables© Cambridge University Library. Surrounded by his wife and ten children, Darwin worked at home drafting the original manuscript of On the Origin of Species – both loving father and keen scientific observer, closely watching the effects of inheritance in his own family. Many of the rare surviving handwritten pages of his most famous tome were kept because they were given to his children as scrap paper to scribble and draw on. Cambridge University Library is the main research library of the University of Cambridge in England. It is also the largest of 114 libraries within the University. The Library is a major scholarly resource for the members of the University of Cambridge and external researchers. It is often referred to within the University as the UL. Twenty-one affiliate libraries are associated with the University Library for the purpose of central governance and administration.