

History Theses: Access to Research Collections in Oxford University Library Services for undergraduates completing dissertations

Introduction

This leaflet is designed to guide history students who wish to use the outstanding research collections spread across the libraries of the Oxford University Library Services (OULS), including the Bodleian Library and Rhodes House Library. This guide will be particularly helpful to those students wishing to use Oxford's outstanding 'Special Collections' - manuscripts, archives, rare books, maps and other special formats.

Specialist curatorial staff in a number of Departments of the OULS are available for more specific advice and guidance:

Western manuscripts: Mike Webb (x77164) mnw@bodley.ox.ac.uk

Modern papers: Helen Langley (x77048) hml1@bodley.ox.ac.uk

Maps: Nick Millea (x87119) nam@bodley.ox.ac.uk

Area Studies: John Pinfold (x82701) jrp@bodley.ox.ac.uk

Rare Books: Clive Hurst (x77023) ch@bodley.ox.ac.uk

History Subject Consultant: Isabel Holowaty (x77263)

isabel.holowaty@ouls.ox.ac.uk

Resources

The main categories of fruitful resources can be described as follows:

Western manuscripts

The holdings of OULS (mainly those in the Bodleian) are the second most important in the UK. They range from Greek papyri through to extensive holdings of 20th century political papers (described in more detail below). The particular strengths are: medieval manuscripts; historical, antiquarian, and political papers 1500-1800 including major sources for English and Irish history, of special importance are the large runs of state papers in the Tanner, Clarendon, and Carte Papers. The 19th century collections are especially strong in British political, military and diplomatic history, and include for example the papers of Benjamin Disraeli. The manuscript holdings relevant to British local studies are especially rich, especially for visual materials such as prints and drawings.

Catalogues: The catalogues are complex. Some are available online at <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/online.htm> also look at the entries for Oxford libraries on the Archives hub <http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk> Detailed catalogues are available in manual form in Duke Humfrey's Library in the Bodleian.

Modern papers

A major strength in Oxford are the archives that document 20th century British Political life. These include the archives of five British Prime Ministers, and over 100 Cabinet Ministers and backbench MPs from all sectors of British politics. They are supplemented by papers of diplomats and civil servants, and most importantly the Archives of the Conservative Party. The papers of intellectuals and scientists like Sir Isaiah Berlin, E P Thompson, and Dorothy Hodgkinson can also be included in this category.

Catalogues: see above.

Maps

The Bodleian Library holds one of the world's principal cartographic collections, with over 1.2 million maps and 20, 000 atlases. The holdings of British mapping from the middle ages to contemporary digital mapping are exceptionally strong, with arguably the most comprehensive collection of Ordnance Survey maps in existence: the collection of Admiralty charts from 1800 is particularly good. Mapping of Europe and North America is also very strong from all periods, of other countries the coverage is more variable, but still among the best in the UK. The Map Library is also a provider of advice and guidance on the use of digital mapping, such as Digimap, and of the use of GIS technologies. Further details can be found at:

<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/guides/maps/>

Catalogues: Although some material is catalogued on OLIS, for most mapping use the card catalogue in the Bodleian Map Room.

Resources for Area Studies

The Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Rhodes House holds approximately 4,000 manuscript collections relating to British colonial history. The collection is particularly strong for the period 1880-1970, and includes the personal papers of major political figures such as Cecil Rhodes, Lord Lugard, Sir Roy Welensky and Sir Cecil Clementi, as well as the archives of non-governmental organizations such as the Anti-Slavery Society, the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Africa Bureau. The library also holds the historical archives (from 1700) of the United Society of the Propagation for the Gospel, the Anglican missionary society with which the former Universities Mission to Central Africa is amalgamated. BLCAS also holds extensive collections of printed government documents from Commonwealth countries and territories, both before and after independence.

Catalogues: The manuscript collections can be traced through the printed catalogues and handlists and the card catalogue in the BLCAS reading room. Some are available online on the Archives Hub: <http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk> The library's extensive collection of printed material is catalogued on OLIS, with the exception of the government documents, which are described in handlists available in the reading room.

The Bodleian Oriental Collections department includes a large collection of South Asian official publications (in the Indian Institute Library), extensive printed and manuscript collections relating to Asia and North Africa, and also administers some archival collections relating to Tibetan studies. A large collection of private papers relating to the Middle East is held by the Middle East Centre at St Antony's College.

Catalogues: Most western-language printed materials are catalogued on OLIS, but some items must be traced using card catalogues and handlists in the Indian Institute Library and the Oriental Reading Room (for archives and manuscripts). Contact St Antony's College regarding the Middle East Private Papers collection.

Rare Books and Printed ephemera

The collections of rare and early printed books and of printed ephemera in Oxford are second only to the British Library. As a 'Copyright' Library since 1610, the holdings of British publications of all periods are vast in size and outstanding in quality, with early books from Europe and the Americas also being held in large quantities. The Bodleian's collection of early newspapers is especially strong. The holdings of the Taylor Institution Library are especially rich in early European materials. A unique element of the collections is the John Johnson Collection of printed ephemera which comprises 1.5 million items from the 17th century onwards, particularly strong in advertising and trade and visual materials, a key resource for social, commercial, and business history.

Catalogues: The vast majority of rare books are catalogued on to the OLIS database. John Johnson material is only partially catalogued. Consult curator for assistance.

Online resources

OULS makes available a number of electronic resources based on research collections holdings in Oxford and elsewhere. Access to these and many other electronic resources is most easily found through **OXLIP**. Potentially useful resources include:

Early English Books Online (EEBO) Full access to images of all books (175, 000) published in the British Isles 1475-1701, and via the **Text Creation partnership (EEBO-TCP)** text searching of 30,000 titles in the collection.

<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home> and <http://dlxs.odl.ox.ac.uk/e/eebo/>

Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO). Full image access to all books (300,000) published in the British Isles and colonial America 1700-1801. Text searching of all the titles in the collection.

<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?locID=oxford&finalAuth=true>

RLG Cultural Materials. An excellent and very large database of images of research material such as prints, drawings, photographs of all subjects, places, and periods, from a large number of libraries, archives and museums worldwide.

<http://culturalmaterials.rlg.ac.uk/>

Digimap. Full digital access to modern Ordnance Survey mapping of the United Kingdom.

<http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/>

Bodleian Ballads. Full access to images of the Bodleian's collection (30, 000) of unique single sheet Ballads of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. An important social history resource.

<http://www.bodleiy.ox.ac.uk/ballads/>

John Johnson. Full access to images of selections (20, 000) from the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera, including 18th century entertainment, the early motor car industry, and British shopkeeping.

<http://www.bodleiy.ox.ac.uk/johnson/johnson.htm>

Internet Library of Early Journals. Full access to images of a selection of 19th and 19th century journals, e.g. *Gentleman's Magazine*. For each title, the first twenty years have been digitised.

<http://www.bodleiy.ox.ac.uk/ilej/>

Medieval Manuscripts. Full image access to a selection (c. 1000) of images from the Bodleian's collection of western illuminated manuscripts.

<http://www.bodleiy.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/medieval/browse.htm>

Access arrangements

Access to Research Collections across OULS will vary from library to library. In all cases students should first approach the library in question (perhaps by first using the contact details above) or use the online catalogues in order to identify potentially useful material. Curatorial staff are always happy to give advice and guidance. Please note that there may be material which for reasons of conservation or access restrictions may not be available for study under this scheme.

Once material has been identified, students should ask their Tutor to complete the Access form (available from the History Faculty Office and Faculty Website). The completed form should then be handed to the relevant Admissions Office in the particular OULS Library or Libraries in order to have tickets validated for use.

For general information about the OULS libraries please consult the booklet: *A Guide to Libraries in Oxford 2003-2004* or go to <http://www.lib.ox.ac.uk/>