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# L1 – THE BRITISH LIBRARY

**THE BRITISH LIBRARY** is the United Kingdom's national library. The foundation collections were established in the 18th century as British Museum's Departments of Manuscripts and of Printed Books. The collections expanded during the 19th century, and a new Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts was created in 1892. These Departments, along with the National Reference Library of Science and Invention, formed the core of the national library when it was established on 1 July 1973 by the British Library Act (1972), and a Lending Division was established in Boston Spa, Yorkshire. The Office of Scientific and Technical Information, the Library Association Library and the British National Bibliography were incorporated in 1974. The India Office Library and Records were acquired in 1982, and the British Institute of Recorded Sound was incorporated as the National Sound Archive in 1983. The Library is managed by the British Library Board.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**The British Library**, St Pancras, 96 Euston Road, London, NW1 2DB (0870-444-1500)

**Internet:** <http://www.bl.uk/>

**Online Catalogue:** <http://catalogue.bl.uk/>

**Chairman:** Sir Colin Lucas DPhil, FRHistS

**Chief Executive:** Dame Lynne Brindley DBE, MA, FLA, FCLIP, FRSA

**Head of Corporate Secretariat:** Mr Andrew Stephens BSc

**Total staff:** 2,102

**Grant in aid:** £106.4 million (2007-08)

**Receipts:** £23.1 million (2007-08)

**Expenditure:** £139.1 million (2007-08)

**Holdings:** 150 million items, with c3 million items added each year

**Open:** see below for opening hours of individual Reading Rooms and departments, including "Operations and Services" for opening hours of main St Pancras Reading Rooms.

**Admission:** admission to reading rooms and collections is by Reader's Pass. Passes are issued to those requiring access to material not readily available elsewhere, or whose work or studies require the facilities of a large research library. Passes can be applied for at:

**Reader Registration Office**

(020-7412-3797)

**Email:** [reader-registration@bl.uk](mailto:reader-registration@bl.uk)

**Open:** Mon, Wed-Thu 0930-1745, Tue 0930-1945, Fri-Sat 0930-1945

## STRUCTURE OF THE LIBRARY

The British Library is divided into six directorates:

### 1. SCHOLARSHIP AND COLLECTIONS

**Director:** Mr Ronald Milne

Responsible for strategic and operational management of the Library's collections, and for the provision of a wide range of value added services to facilitate access to, interpretation and use of the collections by both scholarly and general audiences.

The British Library's collections are all of international renown and provide a wide range of expert advice and research services, as well as supplying content for exhibitions, publications and web-based services.

#### ASIA, PACIFIC AND AFRICA COLLECTIONS

(020-7412-7873; fax: 020-7412-7641)

**Email:** [apac-enquiries@bl.uk](mailto:apac-enquiries@bl.uk)

**Internet:** <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/bldept/apac/>

**Reading Room:** Asian and African Studies Reading Room

Holdings include 65,000 oriental MSS, 900,000 printed vols and 120,000 vols of oriental periodicals and newspapers in over 350 languages, as well as the India Office Records and Library. The main areas of the oriental collections are:

**Judaeo-Christian** – Comprise 7,000 MSS and 106,000 printed vols of Hebrew, Coptic, Syriac, Georgian, Armenian and Ethiopian materials, including ancient Christian MSS and illuminated Bibles and Gospels.

**Islamic** – Comprise 19,000 MSS and 108,000 printed vols in Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Central Asian Iranian and Turkic languages, including illuminated Korans.

**South Asian** – Comprise 20,000 MSS and 435,000 printed vols in Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit, Bengali, Tamil, Sinhalese, Tibetan and other languages, including illustrated MSS and very early Central Asian documents.

**South-East Asian** – Comprise 1,500 MSS and 47,000 printed vols of Burmese, Thai, Vietnamese, Malay, Indonesian and Javanese materials, including fine illustrated Burmese and Thai MSS.

**Far Eastern** – Comprise 16,000 MSS and 195,000 printed vols of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongol and Manchu materials, including the world's oldest printed documents from Japan and China.

The current emphasis is on acquiring modern literature and official documents and materials for the study of all aspects of contemporary as well as traditional Asia and North Africa. The section also houses the secretariat of the International Dunhuang Project (IDP), which promotes the study and

preservation of MSS and printed materials from Dunhuang and other Central Asian sites.

#### India Office Records

The India Office Records include 14 km of shelving, 70,000 bound vols and 105,000 MS and printed maps, and comprise the archives of the East India Company (1600-1858), the Board of Control or Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India (1784-1858), the India Office (1858-1947), the Burma Office (1937-1948) and other British agencies overseas linked to the four main bodies. The former India Office Library collections also include over 30,000 vols of private and family papers of individuals who served in India, 30,000 Indian and Persian paintings, 16,000 British drawings and over 250,000 photographs.

#### Western Language Collections

Originally based on the printed collections of the former India Office Library, these include publications, in English and other western languages, from or relating to Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Australasia and the Pacific Islands.

#### BRITISH AND EARLY PRINTED COLLECTIONS

**Reader Services (general enquiries):** 020-7412-7676; fax: 01937-546333

**Email:** [reader-services-enquiries@bl.uk](mailto:reader-services-enquiries@bl.uk)

#### Early Printed Collections

(020-7412-7564; fax: 020-7412-7577)

**Email:** [rare-books@bl.uk](mailto:rare-books@bl.uk)

**Internet:** <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/bldept/epc/earlyprinted/>

**Reading Room:** Rare Books and Music Reading Room

#### Modern British Collections

(020-7412-7603; fax: 020-7412-7557)

**Email:** [modern-british@bl.uk](mailto:modern-british@bl.uk)

**Internet:** <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/bldept/modbrit/modbritcoll/modbritcoll.html>

**Reading Room:** Humanities Reading Room

These collections comprise the Library's printed materials produced in the British Isles and/or in English from all periods as well as its collections of historic printed materials from Western Europe until 1850. The British collection is the single largest collection of books and periodicals of its kind in the world and this is true of many of the west European collections too.

Books, periodicals and ephemera on all subjects are held in the Early Printed Collections areas. The holdings of incunabula, some 12,500 items, include more editions than any other collection in the world. For publications produced in the British Isles since 1914, the Modern British Collections cover all subjects in the humanities and social sciences. Dispersed throughout these collections there are outstanding examples of fine bindings.

Foundation collections include the Old Royal Library and the library of Sir Hans Sloane. Subsequent acquisitions include: the Ashley Library of English Literature; Sir Joseph Banks' Library (natural history); the Revd C.M. Crachere Library; the Garrick Collection (early English drama); the Grenville Library (politics and literature); the King's Library of George III (history and topography); the Lawrence Durrell Collection; the George Orwell Collection; the John Osborne Collection; and the George Bernard Shaw Collection. These and many others are described on the Library's web pages.

#### MANUSCRIPTS COLLECTIONS

(020-7412-7513; fax: 020-7412-7745)

**Email:** [mss@bl.uk](mailto:mss@bl.uk)

**Internet:** <http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/bldept/manuscr/>

**Reading Room:** Manuscripts Reading Room

These collections form the chief national repository of MSS and private papers and archives, mainly in Western languages. Collections date from the third century BC, and include papyri in Latin and Greek, biblical MSS, MSS in Old English, medieval illuminated MSS and chronicles, seals, charters and manorial records, state papers (16C-17C), family papers (15C-20C), heraldic, antiquarian and genealogical collections, scientific and medical MSS, literary MSS and theatrical records, MS maps and topographical drawings, documents and papers of all periods relating to literary, cultural, social, economic and political history. The collections also include large numbers of