

Maps and prints in libraries

Introduction

If you are visiting a library to look at maps, I'd recommend creating a map research kit - including HB pencils (not the ones with rubbers on the top which some archives don't allow), rubber, pencil sharpener, a magnifying glass, and a tape measure (in cms and inches)

Note that some libraries allow you to take photos for your personal use. Some libraries charge for this. Some libraries don't allow photos, and require you to buy images if you want to use them. If you are allowed to take photos or pay to take images this does not include permission to use images - you still need to get permission for use from the library (it's not really about copyright, but part of the conditions of using a library). Most institutions will give permission to use images for non-profit making activity - but this often takes 6-10 weeks to obtain, and has to be done for each use or an image.

Also look out for topographical prints. You may find images of buildings that are no longer there !

Becoming a member of the [London Topographical Society](#) is a no-brainer for people interested in maps. Annual membership is cheap, and every year you get sent one or more publications, many of which become classics and sell for far more in bookshops. You also get a good newsletter, and an invite to the annual meeting which is held in a different London building each year.

Library list - mainly those in London area !

Please let me know if I've missed off other libraries that hold map collections

[The British Library](#) has the best collection of maps of London, and sadly due to the cyber-attack, search tools are somewhat limited - the [British Library Interim Catalogue](#) can be searched to find printed maps (but, this is likely to miss manuscript maps). To see maps, you need to order them in advance, have a readers ticket, then go to the map library, and you will be delivered the maps. You need to take items you might need in a transparent bag and no ink, and the library officers may search the bags on exit or entry. The library team are very helpful and will provide lots of good advice and point you to written source material. The library holds King George III personal collection of historic maps and plans (about 40,000 items - these are mostly held in giant volumes sorted by geographical locations. The British Library allows you to photograph maps for your personal use at no cost.

Readers tickets are available to all, book an appointment on line - you list a couple of example documents you might want to reference that are not available elsewhere, and provide evidence of your home address. If you are a BL member beforehand you get a three years reader ticket as opposed to one year (and access to the membership room).

[The National Archives](#) also holds many maps - mostly government created. You can use the [Discovery](#) catalogue to search for maps - as well as the National Archives it also catalogues maps in many other places. To access maps held at TNA you need to get a readers ticket (easy to do - apply on line and show evidence of address when you arrive). By visiting the TNA you also get the ability to use the online systems to access maps like the Tithe and Lloyd George surveys free of charge online (normally only available through The Genealogist online).

[The London Archives](#) | [London Archives](#) has a huge range of maps. You can [Search the catalogue](#) online (main items should be catalogued but be aware not everything is in the catalogue - a search of the paper catalogue systems might be worthwhile). The London Archives have [Research guides](#) which can be helpful. Some maps are on the [London Picture Archive](#) although copyright signs overlayed on maps are annoying. Visiting requires getting a pass but this can be done on the day and is easy to do. Accessing maps that are on the London Picture Archive in the original form can be difficult. Photographing documents at TLA requires paying a photographic permit.

[Prints and Drawings Collection at the British Museum](#) includes the large [Frederick Crace](#) | [British Museum](#) collection of prints and maps. They are indexed at the [Search](#) page. You might also find examples of note books

including individual hand produced plans – the note book might be in the catalogue, but the contents might not be.

[V&A Study Rooms](#) have a huge collection of materials, including the RIBA Architecture Study Room that includes a lot of building plans (and some maps as well). Access is limited (often to a few days a week), and you have to use [Explore the V&A Collections](#) and make an appointment to see specific items.

[Bodleian Libraries](#) in Oxford has a good map collection, but I've never visited it. You need a readers card – free for Oxford Graduates, over 66 year olds, and staff and students from public institutions. Catalogues are available (and some of the maps are digitised)

[Our Collections – Royal Geographical Society](#) [Royal Geographical Society catalog](#) you can visit the Foyle Reading Room (£10 a day unless you are a RGS member, need £1 coin for lockers)

[The RIBA Library](#) contains lots of documents and some maps (although many of them have been transferred to the V&A RIBA study rooms). The [Library Catalog](#) catalogue is really useful, and can contain links to images.

[Westminster Archives | Westminster City Council](#) is a great source for Westminster maps and documents and can be searched through [WESTCAT](#). You need a library card (which can be issued at the archives on your visit). Photography of documents is not always allowed, but if it is it will be charged. The library staff are usually very helpful. They hold many documents from the Grosvenor Estate collection (although you may need to get permission to access these). Note that a lot of map material in this collection is poor condition and may not be viewable.

[Bishopsgate Institute Library](#) very friendly library with an unusual range of holdings wider than you might imagine [Search the Online Catalogue](#)

[The library | Wellcome Collection](#) free to join, and one of the best places in London to work. Good [Collections | Wellcome Collection](#) which includes images and maps. The collection isn't great for maps but does have a lot of topographical information including the amazing [London's Pulse: Medical Officer of Health reports 1848-1972](#) which are available online.

[LSE Library](#) access needs to be negotiated (I've not tried). Range of [Catalogues](#) exist. For guides the Charles Booth maps and notebooks (mostly available on line) are particularly notable. They also hold the Land Utilisation Survey maps of the UK done 1930-1938

[Local Studies and Archives Centre – Camden Council](#) has some maps (although mostly copies from other sources). The [Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre catalogue | Simple search](#) was somewhat limited. The library staff are extremely helpful. Photography of images is pretty limited, and charged.

[Islington Council | Islington Local History Centre](#) by appointment only. A catalogue exists at [search](#). The history centre staff are extremely helpful.

[Senate House Library | University of London](#) you need to buy a ticket – either a day ticket or one of the other forms of membership. They have the [E.G.R. Taylor Collection of historic printed maps](#) and some other maps. See [Catalogue](#) for more details.

[Institute of Historical Research](#) holds some map collections (but mainly copies of other maps held elsewhere). More details at [Map collections | Institute of Historical Research](#). Membership to independent researchers now appears to be free.

[The London Library](#) costs a lot to join but has a very wide range of topographical material, including over 400 atlases.

The Royal Geographical Society [Foyle Reading Room](#) (not visited, daily fee)

The [Parliamentary Archives](#) (now closed, collection merging with NA), Westminster Abbey [Library and Muniment Room](#) and [The Royal Archives](#) (online catalogue with some maps on line)

[Jisc Library Hub Discover](#) not a library, but this is a source for checking holdings of academic institutions - and might disclose material not indexed elsewhere.