

Transcript: Discovering Archives at the Bodleian Libraries

Welcome to Discovering Archives at the Bodleian Libraries

In this iSkills session, we will be looking at the Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts Online Catalogue, how to use the Summary Catalogues of Western manuscripts, how to search other Bodleian printed archives and manuscripts catalogues, as well as some of the National Archive gateways for locating archival material across the UK.

One of the key things to understand when working with archives and archives catalogues is archival arrangement. Archival arrangement is not based on subjects like bibliographical cataloguing. An archive catalogue is very different to that of a catalogue of books.

Archival arrangement description is based on two key principles: provenance and original order. The archive of one creator is never mixed with that of another. For example, the archive of the Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, would not be mixed in a subject based catalogue with other archives of other cabinet ministers of the 1964 Labour government. The archive is a distinct entity in its own right and it's described and arranged in one catalogue to reflect that.

The principle of original order is that the arrangement of the archive should reflect the way it was originally created and used by its creator. This helps protect and safeguard the context of the material in the archive. As you can see from this diagram, this is how an archive is typically arranged.

So, at the very top level of the catalogue will be the collection level, which provides an overview of the archive, the whole entity. Then moving down to the series levels, which provide an overview of material right to a specific function or activity. Then moving down to the lower levels of file and item level. So, these will be descriptions of material such as a file of papers, correspondence or even an individual letter. It's worth noting that most archives catalogues probably won't go down to item level. For example, at the Bodleian, file level equates to a box of material and this is the level that you will find most frequently used for cataloguing in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts.

So, in this session we'll mainly be focussing on Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts, our online catalogue, post-1500 archives and manuscripts. Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts includes descriptions for just over 100,000 boxes of archives and manuscripts material collected by the Bodleian Libraries dating from circa 1500 to the twenty first century. Material described is predominately in manuscript form, but the collections also contain large amounts of photographic material, audio visual items and born digital content. Bodleian archives and manuscripts include descriptions of manuscripts acquired singly, such as Jane Austen's volume the first, or individual manuscript diaries; small collections such as George Brownlee's laboratory notebooks on haemophilia research; early modern manuscript collections such as the cart manuscripts; personal archives, such as those of poets and writers including Alan Bennett and Robert Bridges, of politicians such as Benjamin Disraeli, Clement Atlee and Barbara Castle, intellectuals such as R.G. Collingwood and Isaiah Berlin and scientists including Dorothy Hodgkin, Louise Johnson and Walter Bodmer; family archives, such as

those of the Clarendon and Lovelace-Byron families; and large archives of organisations such as Oxfam, the anti-apartheid movement and the Conservative Party.

Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts includes full descriptions for all holdings catalogued after 2001. Also, full descriptions for some holdings catalogued prior to 2001 where these have been converted from typescript form to digital form. Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts also includes collection level descriptions of most of our legacy, hard copy finding aids. Collection level descriptions provide a high-level summary of the collection only and usually contain a reference to the hard copy catalogue, which will need to be consulted in order to see full descriptions of the boxes and volumes held within that archive.

There's a great deal of material coming to Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts in the near future. All newly created catalogues and descriptions for post-1500 archives and manuscripts will now be published in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. We also have a three-year project under way to convert all legacy hardcopy catalogues of music archives and manuscripts to digital form for Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. The project is also cataloguing all uncatalogued music archive and manuscript collections and these will be published on Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts throughout the course of the project.

Catalogues of the archived collections formerly held at the Alexander Library of Ornithology, following the closure of the Tinbergen Building that moved to the Weston Library, will be published on Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. We will also be converting the Bodleian summary catalogues of western manuscripts into digital form for

inclusion in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. These catalogues describe archives and manuscripts acquired by the Bodleian from its foundation in 1602 through to 1975. This will add a further 50,000 boxes to the catalogue.

It's important to note what Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts does not cover. Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts does not yet provide a comprehensive search of all our archive and manuscript holdings, but we are working towards this goal. For example, the summary catalogue and music conversion projects. There are still offline printed catalogues that you will need to consult for a comprehensive search of archives and manuscripts held by the Bodleian Libraries. Descriptions of the library's western medieval manuscripts are available on the Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries website using the link you can see here [<https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>]. Some medieval items also appear in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts where they form part of an archive also containing post-1500 materials. But you will always find our best description of a medieval manuscripts on the Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries catalogue.

Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts does not contain descriptions of the University's own archives. Further information is available via the Oxford University Archives website [<https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/oua>].

Descriptions of manuscripts in Oriental languages can be found in a range of specialist catalogues. The Oriental Manuscript and Rare Books LibGuide provides further information on these [<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/oriental-sc>].

Also, just remember Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts provides descriptions of archival manuscripts. It's not a platform delivering digitised or born digital collection material. In some catalogues, there will be links to Digital Bodleian and digitised images of collections.

We will now demonstrate how to use Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts.

Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts can be accessed via the URL archives.bodleian.ox.ac.uk. And this is the home page. At the very top we have a navigation bar. I will go through these sections in turn. The search functionality is here, followed by a list of the material that is included, so this is post-1500 archives and manuscripts and a list of material that is not included, such as medieval manuscripts and you can access these via these links. New material is been added all the time, and you can see the latest additions to catalogue via our 'new additions' page here.

By clicking on the collections link in the navigation bar, you'll be taken to a list of all the collections described in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. You can select to view all the collections in the one long alphabetical sequence, and you can rearrange this either in ascending alphabetical or descending alphabetical order. Or you can view material by year, so ascending year of creation and descending year of the latest date held in the archive collection.

Clicking on the collections link in the navigation bar will take you through to a list of all the collections held and described in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. You can select to view all the collections in one long

alphabetical list or arrange them via the dates of the collection using the right-hand drop-down menu shown here. On the left-hand side of the screen, you can filter using a free text search, filter using date spans, index subjects, index names or filter by language. For example, to search within your search results, you can do a search using the free text. I'm showing this example using the word 'Berlin'. You can also filter your search results by dates, for example, searching for 1940 to 1949 will return collections containing material within that date range.

The index subjects filter, this is arranged by frequency of use, so the more heavily used the subject term, the higher it appears in the list. These subject terms are high level and have been applied at collection level in catalogues. So, this is the highest level description in an archive catalogue. All catalogues have been tagged with their century of creation, so these are the most prominent in the list. You also have an indexed names filter and, like the subjects, the most frequently index names appear first on the list. Again, like the subjects, the names are indexed at collection level. So, these are the principle people, families and organisations related to the archive as a whole. And by selecting one of these, you will see a list of catalogues linked to that name. Clicking on indexed subjects at the navigation bar will take you to a list of the subject terms used in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. These are organised alphabetically, and you can again have these displayed as ascending or descending alphabetical order.

The subject terms in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts have been constructed using Library of Congress subject headings. You can also use the filter to narrow your subject terms. For example, if I was interested in university, I could filter using the word 'university'. It will

take me to the appropriate search term by clicking on this. This will take me to catalogues where the University of Oxford has been linked as a subject term.

Selecting indexed names in the navigation bar will take me to the list of names that have been indexed in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts catalogues. These are again organised in alphabetical order. And you can do this in reverse alphabetical order by using the right-hand drop-down menu. You also have the ability to filter name by organisation, family or person names. And you can also use the free text filter to narrow your name results. For example, a search for 'Oxfam' will bring up names featuring the word 'Oxfam'. By clicking on 'Oxfam GB', we can see a list of catalogues associated with that name.

Returning to the home page, we can now demonstrate the ways to search Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. You have five ways you can search for material. Firstly, by full text catalogue description. This is the default option. Use it to search the full text of all collection material descriptions, as well as indexed subjects and indexed names. You can apply filters to your search results to refine your search further. This is usually the best option for most users.

[Types 'Berlin' into the search bar.]

When you reach the search results page, this will return results wherever they appear. This could be a collection, a series or at file level. Search results are, by default, sorted with the most relevant first. Various factors are taken into account when deciding relevance. All else being

equal, collections and single items are ranked higher than the series of file levels that make up collections.

[Types 'Isaiah' into the search bar.]

For example, this free text search I have just undertaken here, I could limit my results to show me only catalogues of full collections, or, additionally, I could limit to just show me file level descriptions. So, descriptions of boxes.

You can also search by a shelf mark. So, I will return to the home page and the search options and select shelf marks and type in my shelf mark.

[Types 'MS. Sherfield 600' into the search box.]

And within the results, you can see here, that 'MS. Sherfield 600' is my shelf mark and the description of the box within the archive for 'Roger Makins, 1st Baron Sherfield'.

Let's return to the other search options I have available to me. I can click on new search. So, you can also search by index subjects, index names. And you can also search by the titles of descriptions of material in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. And this is useful for identifying genres of material we have in our collections. So, for example, if I was interested in photographic history, a good search to do would be 'photograph'.

[Types 'photograph' into the search bar.]

And then I can also use the years to narrow the dates I am interested in. If I click on search, it's brought back all the collections and boxes containing early photographs in the Bodleian's collections. But by clicking on 'file' in the digital filters, it's pretty much just a description of boxes containing photographs within the period I'm interested in. So, for example, we have here a box of photographs from the 1860s in the archives of William Henry Fox Talbot.

So, you can also build some more advance searches using the advanced search button. And there are lots of examples of advance searches in our help pages, which you can access by the navigation link to the help page at the top of the screen. To demonstrate our help page you can click [here](#), and you will see how to do some useful searches, searching by name, subject, shelf marks, how to refine your search and some search tips on using quotation marks, and Boolean operators and combination searches as well.

So, having identified the material I'm interested in, I can show you how to navigate a catalogue within Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts.

So, I'm interested in the archive of Iona and Peter Opie and clicking on the link will take me to the full catalogue of this particular archive. So, on the collection overview, this gives me an overview of the archive, its scope and content, the dates that it spans, how big the archive is, so in this case, forty five linear metres and 362 shelf marks, the main languages in the archive, any conditions regarding the access to the material in the archive, our preferred citation, the full range of shelf marks and some additional descriptions, such as a biographical history

of Iona and Peter Opie, how the Bodleian acquired the archive and any related materials in other collections. Also, all of the indexed names and subjects at collection level. So again, if I'm interested in children's literature in the collections, I can click on children's literature and see other archives related to that subject in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts. And our contact details for accessing the collection are available at the foot of every catalogue. Again, we also can see the citation by clicking the citation button at top of the catalogue, as well as details on how to request material in the archive that you'd like to see. And clicking on the PDF, I can generate a PDF version of the catalogue so you can read as one long document. I can view the content of the collection as one big list by clicking on collection contents. Or, alternatively, I can use the right-hand navigation box here to navigate the hierarchy of the archive from a top level through the series into an individual box. I have a description of 'MS Opie 1', a box of children's papers covering circa 1951 to 1959. Some further description of the content within that box. And my shelf mark, that would allow me to order it. And again, I can see how to cite this box by clicking on this button at the top, and how to request this material to the reading room in the Weston Library.

I can also do a search of material just within this collection. So, I'm just interested in, for example, the records of the school. And this search is just searching the contents of this catalogue. So, my search results will appear. And then I can click through and view individual boxes with the collection containing that search term. There are full details of how to search the catalogue, hints on searching, descriptions of what the content is in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts all in our help page. And I would encourage you to have a look at this when you use the

catalogue for a more detailed guide on how to search all the material in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts.

So, turning now to how to use the Bodleian's printed hard copy catalogues of archives and manuscripts, starting with the summary catalogues.

The summary catalogues contain descriptions for all archives and manuscripts acquired by the Bodleian from 1602 through to 1975. The summary catalogue of Western manuscripts, which is its full published title, covers everything acquired from the foundation of the library through to 1915. This is also commonly referred to as the old summary catalogue.

The summary catalogue of post medieval Western manuscripts, commonly known as the new summary catalogue, covers acquisitions made between 1916 and 1975. This catalogue, however, does not include descriptions of material held on deposit by the Bodleian. So that's material that the Bodleian does not own.

The catalogues are arranged primarily by chronological order of acquisition. So, for example, the old summary catalogue has volumes for the 17th and 18th century acquisitions.

There are three main ways of searching the summary catalogue. Firstly, using the summary catalogue number. This is a reference given to each box or volume described in the summary catalogue. The numbering sequence starts at one and runs sequentially from the old summary catalogue through to the new summary catalogue. It is important to note

that the summary catalogue number is not the shelf mark and should not be used as such for the citation or reference. The summary catalogue numbers are printed on the spine of each volume. So, if you have the number, simply locate the correct volume and look it up. So, in this example, the summary catalogue number is 8573, which brings me to my description of the material. And to order or cite this box of material, the shelf mark is MS. Wood B. 2.

The second way to search the summary catalogue is by shelf mark. The first volumes of both the old and new summary catalogue contain a prospectus of Bodleian shelf marks described in the catalogue. So, for this example, I'm looking for MS. Autogr. d. 3. The numbers in brackets are the summary catalogue numbers, which you can then use to identify the description in the correct volume.

The third way to search the summary catalogues are by using the index at the end of the old and new summary catalogues. So, if I was interested, for example, in Henry Gough, who died in 1862, I could look him up in the index and I will find a summary catalogue number. And if I look up 45897 in the correct volume of the summary catalogue, that will give me a description for that material. It should also be noted that the index volumes also contain a separate index of donors and owners, which works in the same way as the name and subject index.

The printed volumes of the summary catalogues are available in the Weston Library reading rooms. There are also searchable PDFs of the summary catalogue, which you can access via SOLO. And as noted earlier in this session, we are currently the process of converting the summary catalogue descriptions to digital form for inclusion in Bodleian

Archives and Manuscripts. And the first few catalogues have already appeared.

The quarto catalogues, published in the 19th century, describe some of the Bodleian's most important collections. They are collectively known as the quarto catalogues because of their size, and they are written variously in Latin, Greek, Italian and English. You can find searchable PDFs of the majority of these catalogues online via SOLO and you can follow the links from our LibGuide with the URL referenced here on the bottom of the screen [<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/modern-sc/quarto>]. You can also find collection level descriptions in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts for the Ashmole, Canonici, Digby, Laud, Rawlinson and Tanner collections. The benefit of the collection level description is that they provide an overview of what these collections contain.

The quarto catalogues themselves are volume by volume, item by item descriptions. They do not provide an overview of the content of the collections. For example, Richard Rawlinson was a manuscript collector, and his collection includes the state papers of Thurloe, naval papers of Samuel Pepys, mediaeval manuscripts and literary manuscripts. But there is no detailed overview of the collection in the introductory matter to each of the quarto catalogues. So, a recommended starting place is to go from the collection level descriptions in Bodleian Archives and Manuscripts.

Full details of all our other main published hard copy catalogues can be accessed via the archives and modern manuscripts LibGuide shown here at this URL [<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/modern-sc/quarto>].

[sc/catalogues](#)]. These include the post 1975 catalogues, which contain descriptions of archives and manuscripts acquired after 1975 and therefore are not described in the summary catalogue. There is also a card index of collections available in the Weston rare books and manuscript reading room relating to these catalogues. There are also descriptions of the classified shelf mark sequences held in the Weston rare books and manuscript reading rooms. These are shelf marks such as MS. Eng. hist, MS. Eng. poet or MS. Top for topographical collections. These are held in green and black binders arranged by shelf mark available on the open shelves of the reading room.

Printed African and Commonwealth archive catalogues can be found on the open shelves in the Charles Wendell David reading room in the Weston Library. And there's also a card index available of these collections within our online catalogue. The main finding aids are the published manuscript collections in Rhodes House Library, with individual large archive collections having their own separate catalogues. For full details of all these catalogues, please see our LibGuide [<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/modern-sc/catalogues>].

Two additional resources are our web archive collections, the first of which is the Bodleian Libraries Web Archive, which collects and preserves University of Oxford websites and websites relating to our special collections. And the second resource is the U.K. Web Archive, which is a collaboration between the six U.K. legal deposit libraries and collects UK based websites, including collections on topics and themes such as the EU referendum and the first world war anniversary. For further details of all the catalogues and resources discussed in this

section, please visit our various LibGuides and subject guides referenced here on this slide.

- Special Collections catalogues and finding aids:
<https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/weston/findingresources/catalogues>
- Subject guides:
<https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/weston/findingresources/guides>
- Early Modern archives & manuscripts LibGuide:
<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/early-sc>
- Archives and Modern manuscripts LibGuide:
<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/modern-sc>
- Web archives LibGuide: <https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/web-archives>

'Discovery' is the archive catalogue of the U.K. National Archive and contains over 32 million descriptions of records held by both The National Archives and archives across the UK [<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>]. This is the ideal first place to start a search for identifying material held in the U.K. It incorporates a number of different resources in one search: The National Register of Archives, the Manorial Documents Register, which is the official index for English, and Welsh Manorial records, and also includes details of some archives related to the U.K. held abroad.

The Archives Hub contains descriptions of archive collections held across 350 institutions in the UK [<https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/>]. Its main focus is on archives held by higher education institutions. In addition to catalogues, the Hub also includes some themed collections.

These are curated collections of resources, normally digitised content, often created as part of projects by institutions on specific things. It is important to know that the Archives Hub does not hold any physical archives or content itself. It is a union catalogue of material held by disparate institutions.

And finally, turning to AIM 25 [<https://aim25.com/>]. AIM 25 is an overview of archives held in the London area, within the M25. It's a slightly odd geographical distinction, but there are a lot of archival repositories located in London, over 150. AIM 25 provides online access to collection level descriptions. So, these are high level summaries of whole collections held by different institutions in London. It also offers the ability to browse by subject.