

THE  
LONDON  
LIBRARY

# A guide to the History collections

## **The Collections**

The History section is one of the largest in the library, and is constantly being expanded and developed. Most of our history books are in English, though material can also be found in other major European languages.

The section is largely comprised of historical monographs, though it also contains works of popular history, textbooks, edited thematic collections, source books and state papers.

The collection encompasses a wide variety of historical approaches, supplementing political and military history with social, economic and cultural studies, as well as historiography, theories of history and counter-factual history.

This extensive collection includes works on individual countries, monarchs, historical events and topics such as feudalism, international relations and chivalry. Particular strengths are to be found in the 5000+ volumes on World War I and II, over 600 volumes about Napoleon, over 500 regimental and divisional British army histories, sections on British and European royalty and emperors, and on British imperial history. The range of individual sections- such as the Dreyfus affair, Imaginary History – covers some 350 other subjects.

The Library's History books are located in the Back Stacks, just off the red staircase leading from the main Issue Hall. The History sequence runs over three floors, beginning in the back room of Level 4 of the Back Stacks, and continuing down through Levels 3 and 2.

The most recent issues of history-related periodicals can be found in the Reading Room, with earlier bound volumes shelved in the Periodicals section in the Basement. Historical material on particular cities or regions can on occasion also be found in the Topography section in the Basement level of the Back Stacks.

For particular aspects of more specialist areas, such as military history, there is some cross-over with Science & Miscellaneous shelfmarks. For example, S. Military Science, S. Spies and S. War and Peace. Additionally, other sections throughout the collection will have shelfmarks that cover the history of that particular subject.

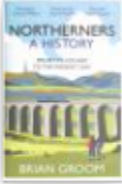
For example, L. Literature, Hist. of. or Bibliog. History, Europe.


Biographical studies of historical figures feature heavily in the Biography section of the library on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> floors of the Central Stacks, and Art history is located in the Art section in the main Art Room and in T.S. Eliot House.

## **Understanding shelfmarks**

The Library's collection is divided into broad subject areas (e.g. History, Literature, and Topography) and then into smaller areas, arranged alphabetically. Within each section, books are generally arranged by author name, but edited titles are filed under the book title instead. Check the Catalyst (online catalogue) record for the 'shelved under' information.

In order to make the most effective use of space, the collection is also shelved by size. Check the end of shelfmarks for the notations 4to. (Quarto), Folio, and Folio Extra Large, which may indicate a different place to look for the books.



BOOK  
**Northerners : a history, from the Ice Age to the present day**  
Groom, Brian, author.  
2022  
Shelved Under: Groom, Brian,  
 Available at [London Library New Books \(H. England\)](#) >

Above is an example of a book record from the catalogue. Here you can see that the book is available (i.e. on the shelf) in the History section (H.), in the subsection for England, and shelved under the author 'Groom'. Books may be requested and put aside ready for collection, but we would always encourage members to browse the shelves and discover books serendipitously. Items from the Library's Special Collections cannot be borrowed but may be consulted in the Library under supervised conditions, given 72 hours' notice.

## Shelfmarks

The Library's catalogues indicate that books are part of the History collection by the prefix H. (for History). Some shelfmarks are large, such as H. England, and are subdivided further by letters marking the authors' surnames (or titles in the case of edited collections). Others, such as H. Dreyfus Case, pertaining to singular events, are much smaller.

Many shelfmarks refer to the history of particular countries, such as H. Ireland or H. Poland, including stateless nations such as H. Kurdistan. Some of these national shelfmarks are sub-divided between general histories and social history, in the case of H. England (Gen.) and H. England, social &c, and some between ancient and modern history, in the example of H. Greece (Ancient) and H. Greece (Modern).

As well as national shelfmarks, the History section has individual shelfmarks for important events such as H. French Revolution, particular wars (for example, H. European War I, H. Franco-German War) or key themes (H. Revolution, H. Battles).

English monarchs will be found in H. England, Kings & Queens, followed by the name of the monarch. Foreign monarchs have their own sections, for example H. Frederick II, (the Great), King of Prussia.

Works on practical aspects of history (such as *The Historian's Craft* by Marc Bloch) will be found in H. Methods of Historical Study, while more theoretical and philosophical approaches to history as a discipline are shelved in H. Philosophy of History. Counter-factual history is located in H. Imaginary History. Some shelfmarks are now archaic, such as H. Abyssinia, reflecting the nomenclature at the time when the shelfmark was created. On occasion shelfmarks develop in line with geopolitical changes, for example with the creation of H. Bangladesh to reflect the country's independence from Pakistan. The shelfmarks are subject to an ongoing process of modernisation so many inconsistencies may still be found in the meantime while we update the collection.

### Shelving Arrangements

Within each size sequence, the subject categories are arranged alphabetically. The octavo sequence begins in the back room of the Back Stacks on Level 4 and continues through the front and back rooms of Level 3, finishing in the back room of the Back Stacks Level 2. On each floor, the sequence begins on left-hand wall from the front of the room to the back, and continues in a back-to-front-to-back pattern across the room. The 4to sequence is located in the front room of Level 2 of the Back Stacks, and the folio sequence continues directly on after the 4to books.

Within each subject category, books are arranged alphabetically by their author's surname or, in the case of edited collections or books with multiple authors, by their title.

### Shelfmark Locations

Back Stacks Level 4 (back room)	H. Abyssinia - H. England, Kings & Queens
Back Stacks Level 3 (front room)	H. England, social & c - H. Huns
Back Stacks Level 3 (back room)	H. Iceland - H. Race Relations
Back Stacks Level 2 (back room)	H. Records - H. Zululand
Back Stacks Level 2 (front room)	History 4to and History folio

### Electronic resources

The Library subscribes to a number of important historical databases which can be searched onsite or remotely. An *All resources* search on Catalyst, the Library's electronic catalogue, will return a wide set of results including book titles, journal articles and database results. One key resource is British History Online, a digital library of major primary and secondary sources, including digitised versions of the Survey of London and the Victoria County Histories. Other important resources include the British Newspaper Archive, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and the Illustrated London News.



### **Journals and Societies publications**

The Library holds many periodical titles related to history. Some of these titles are no longer subscribed to, or are defunct, but the Library retains back issues in its collection. Some titles may be online only or kept off-site. Please check the online catalogue for details of holdings.

The latest issues of periodicals are available for consultation in the Reading Room, with earlier issues bound as volumes and shelved in the basement or off-site, available for loan.

Through the online catalogue, members can view a range of electronic journals – as well as other electronic publications and databases – in the library or remotely. There is also access to JSTOR, an electronic periodicals archive that allows members to access back-runs of over 750 additional periodical titles.

The Library possesses a range of materials published by institutions and learned societies. These society publications are shelved in the Societies section in the basement, under the original name of each issuing institute. These include a significant number of county historical and field archaeological journals, many dating back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Some examples are: Cambridge Antiquarian Society Proceedings, London Record Society Publications, English Place-Name Society Journal.

