

THE
LONDON
LIBRARY

A guide to the Biography collection

Navigating the collection

The aim of this guide is to help you navigate biographical holdings and resources within the London Library collection, and to facilitate browsing of this material. Members looking for a particular item or for full subject coverage should refer to the Library's catalogue. This leaflet is not a comprehensive guide to the scope of our biographical material or collection policies, past or present, nor does it highlight rare material or other items of interest.



Biography covers all biographical and autobiographical works covering individuals, families or collectives and includes diaries, journals, correspondence and speeches. Much of this material is classified within the Biography shelfmark and located on Floors 3 and 4 of the Central Stack:

Floor 4 BIOGRAPHY (A – Neh)
 BIOGRAPHY 4to & folio

Floor 3 BIOGRAPHY (Nei-Z)
 BIOGRAPHICAL COLLECTIONS

Exceptions to this are:

- Popes: biographical works on Popes, including autobiographical works, can be found in
- Monarchs and consorts: biographical works on English monarchs and consorts can be found in **H. England, Kings &c.**, in alphabetical order by name, and within this by reign or in the general **H. England** sequence by name. Other monarchs and consorts can be found in the general History sequence, usually within their own subject heading, e.g. works on Napoleon I will be found in **H. Napoleon I** and works on Josephine will be found in **H. Josephine, Empress of the French**.
- Art and Literature: if a work covering an individual or group contains a significant amount of work by the subject/s then this may be classified with the subject's work in Art or Literature, rather than Biography.
- The Three Great Exceptions: All works by or about Dante; Goethe & Shakespeare, including biographical work can be found in Literature.
 - Dante - biographical work on Dante can be found in author order under **L. Italian Lit., Dante**.
 - Goethe - biographical work on Goethe can be found in author order under **L. German Lit., Goethe**.

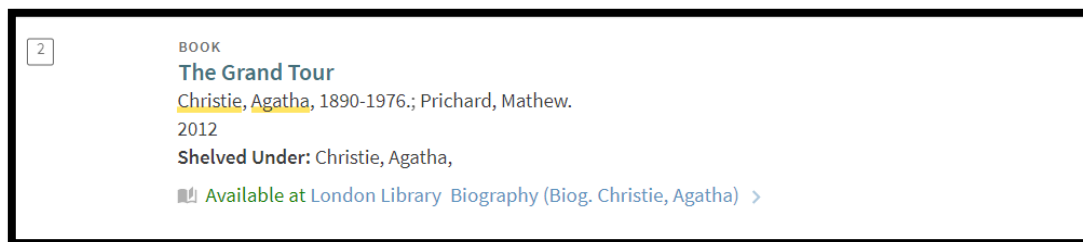
- Shakespeare - biographical work on Shakespeare can be found in author order under **L. English Lit., Shakespeare.**

If you are looking for material about a specific person or family, it may be useful to consider different forms of name, titles and for married women if they were known by this or their maiden name.

Understanding shelfmarks

The collection is divided into broad subject areas (History, Literature, Topography, for example) and then into smaller subject 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 record for the 'shelved under' information.

In Biography, books are filed alphabetically by the name of the book's subject. If two subjects have the same surname, the first name is taken into account. Books about a family will precede books about the individual. For example, a shelf order may run *Smith, family of*, followed by *Smith, Anna*, then *Smith, Emily* etc. Please note that names are treated as one word regardless of gaps, hyphens or apostrophes. Names that start *Mc* are treated as though the spelling is *Mac*.



Above is an example of a book record from the catalogue. Here you can see that the book is shelved under the author's name and that it is available (i.e. on the shelf) in the Biography section (Biog.), and then in the Christie sub-section. Within the section of each author, titles are shelved in the following order:

1. Autobiographies and Memoirs
2. Correspondence and Letters
3. Diaries and Journals
4. Speeches
5. Books written about the subject



In the second example, the book will be in the Christie sub-section, but shelved under the author's name within that section. Please note that in order to make the most effective use of space, the collection is also shelved by size. Check the end of shelf marks for the notations 4to (quarto), Folio and Folio Extra Large that may indicate a different place to look for the books. In general, larger volumes are shelved in the same room as the smaller.

Books may be requested and put aside for ready for collection, but we would always encourage members to browse the shelves for themselves and discover the books they did not know they needed. Rare texts and anything published before 1700 may have been moved to our Special Collections. Items that cannot be borrowed, can be consulted in the Library under supervised conditions with 72 hours' notice. Please speak to staff in the Issue Hall if you have any questions.

Reference and electronic resources

The main Reading Room houses a number of reference biographical dictionaries and encyclopaedias, including standard texts such as *Who's Who* and the *Oxford dictionary of national biography*. There are also a number of biographical sources from different countries and across specific subjects. Older editions can be found in the Basement.

The Library subscribes to a number of electronic resources covering biographical material; a list of all electronic resources may be found on the Catalyst homepage. There is also a wealth of newspaper resources that can be searched.

Other areas of the collection that may be of interest include:

- Wills and Parish Registers on Level 7 of the Back Stacks
- Genealogy and Heraldry on Level 7 of the Back Stacks
- Societies and Periodicals can be found in the Reading Room (current issues) and Basement (back issues)