

Quick Guide to the Map Room & its Collections

Look at the [Library web pages](#) for latest information on service availability during Covid-19 pandemic

- **Cambridge University Library Map Department** has over **1.3 million maps** of all parts of the world dating from the 15th century to the present. We also have atlases, views, gazetteers and books on cartography. We are constantly adding new and older material to the collection.
- Maps are covered by **legal deposit** so CUL should receive a copy of everything published in Great Britain, though things do fall through the net!
- Only a small proportion of our collection is catalogued online so you need to check **iDiscover** (the Library's online catalogue), [ArchiveSearch](#) (the University's archive catalogue), and the Map Department's **card catalogue** to find out what we have. For more information on our catalogues see www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/maps/finding-maps

Note that:

- ❖ The card catalogue is arranged in one alphabetical sequence by the place covered by the map.
 - ❖ Individual maps in atlases and those in map series are not catalogued separately.
 - ❖ All of the letters and numbers, plus the punctuation (including hyphens), in classmarks are important!
- There are very few items on open access in the Map Room so for most items you will need to fill in an **order form** so that staff can fetch the items for you. There is **No Borrowing** of maps.
 - The Map Room is **currently closed** to visitors but staff can answer remote enquiries and it may be possible for you to view maps in another CUL reading room. Check <https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/using-library> for the latest information. [The Map Room is normally open for a shorter time than the rest of the Library – we are not open in the evenings, at lunch time (12.45 to 2pm) or on Saturdays (although pre-ordered items can be transferred to the Rare Books Reading Room)].
 - You can use your own camera to **take photographs** of items in the collection for private research purposes, but not for publication (and no flash, tripods or camera noise!). The Library's Digital Content Unit can also make reproductions for you.
 - **Pencils only** may be used in the Map Room – no pens! We have pencils for sale if you forget to bring one.
 - To **protect maps** we try not to touch their surface and so place plastic sheets over them when close study is required.

You might like to know:

- Before the advent of Ordnance Survey in 1791, mapping was a very local activity often at estate or county level. Some areas are well mapped, others less so. Older maps tend to be less detailed and, the further back you go, more pictorial.
- There are maps in other parts of CUL – most notably in the Manuscripts and Rare Books Departments and in the University Archives – and in other parts of the University, especially the Colleges.

For More Information:

- ❖ **Ask** a member of staff in person, by phone, letter or email:-
Map Department, Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge, CB3 9DR
Tel: 01223 333041 ; Email: maps@lib.cam.ac.uk
- ❖ Cartographic Resources **LibGuide** https://libguides.cam.ac.uk/cartographic_resources
- ❖ Perhaps one of our **Information Sheets** will help. They cover subjects such as searching for maps in CUL's catalogues, locations of other map libraries, where to buy maps, etc. They are available in the Map Room or online at www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/maps/information-sheets
- ❖ Take a look at our **web pages** at www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/maps, especially the Links page at www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/maps/links

Key Material Types in the Map Department

Manuscript Maps	The Map Department has many manuscript maps, some of which are viewable on CUDL https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/maps/1), and there are more in the Manuscripts Department of CUL. We also have reproductions of manuscript maps held elsewhere. Usually, the largest collection of manuscript maps of any locality is in the local record/archives office, and don't forget about The National Archives in Kew.
Town Plans	Good selection in CUL. Modern town plans are not always catalogued – ask a member of staff
County Maps	Before the OS got going printed maps tended to be less detailed than we expect today. A list of some 'large scale' county maps (often at a scale of 1" to 1 mile ; mostly pre-OS ; CUL has a good selection) can be found in <i>The large scale county maps of the British Isles, 1596-1850: a union list</i> , compiled by Elizabeth M. Rodger and published in 1972 (S696.c.97.39). Because the counties were mapped independently by different cartographers, not all counties have the same type of maps and not all are of the same quality.
Road Books & Maps	Road Books are lists of places along roads, with distances and sometimes other information. CUL has a good selection. Roads first appeared on printed English county maps in the late 16th century. Ogilby's 1675 atlas marked the first systematic survey of British roads
Ordnance Survey (OS) Maps	With the exception of the oldest, most detailed scales – some 1:2,500 (25") and 1:500 scale maps from the late 1800's – we should have a copy of every OS map ever published. There are exceptions but we do have a lot of them! Some OS maps can also be viewed on the National Library of Scotland's website at http://maps.nls.uk/os/index.html and/or https://maps.nls.uk/ For the most detailed maps there are two numbering systems: County Series (up to WWII) and National Grid (after WWII). For most areas there will be several editions of the maps but the dates may vary widely between neighbouring sheets. The most recent, most detailed maps can only be viewed online in the Map Room. Public libraries may also be able to provide online access to the most recent OS maps for their local area. Or, if you are a student or member of staff at the University take a look at Digimap an online service providing current and historic mapping: www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/maps/digital-maps/digimap The <i>Ordnance Surveyors' Drawings</i> , 1789-c1840, are manuscript maps from which the earliest 1:63,360 (1" to 1 mile) maps were derived. The Map Department has black and white facsimiles of some of these. The originals are in the British Library and colour images can be seen on their website www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/index.html . The <i>Charles Close Society for the Study of Ordnance Survey Maps</i> website and publications are good places to go for more information on OS mapping www.charlesclosesociety.org/ .
Aerial Photographs	CUL has some 1:10,560 air photo mosaics produced by OS just after WWII, but only parts of Great Britain are covered. For some urban areas there are also 1:1,250 photographs. The mosaics for Scotland are available on the National Library of Scotland website at http://maps.nls.uk/os/air-photos/ The National Collection of Aerial Photography (NCAP) is a great source of air photos https://ncap.org.uk/ See also the small selection on CUDL at https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/landscapehistories/1
Particulars of Sale	These are documents produced when houses / estates etc. were sold. Some are just text – especially the older ones – others include photographs and / or maps. Most are 19th/20th century. We have several thousand of these – look in <i>iDiscover</i> , the card catalogue and on <i>ArchiveSearch</i> https://archivesearch.lib.cam.ac.uk/repositories/2/resources/1180 to find them. See also the blog at https://specialcollections-blog.lib.cam.ac.uk/?p=11824
Thematic Mapping & Hydrographic Charts	We actively collect National atlases since they usually include thematic maps, often difficult to obtain elsewhere, and also, where possible, acquire thematic maps (geology, soil, land-use, etc., etc.) and, for example, linguistic atlases. We also have a large collection of UK Hydrographic Office charts covering all parts of the world.
Topographic Mapping	We try to collect for all parts of the world at a scale of at least 1:250,000 though for many areas we have much more detailed mapping. The Soviet military maps of many parts of the world are an important source of topographic information, especially for areas where local mapping is not publicly available. See https://www.sovietmaps.com/ for some background information.
Railway Maps, etc.	We have a large collection of railway maps, plans and diagrams of track layouts, buildings, structures, etc. Mostly listed on ArchiveSearch https://archivesearch.lib.cam.ac.uk/repositories/2/resources/1181 See also the blog post at https://specialcollections-blog.lib.cam.ac.uk/?p=18766
Views	The Map Department has some topographic views including a large collection of postcards.
Reference Books	For example: Books on the history of map making, including those on a specific place ; Lists of maps of various areas, e.g. countries, counties, towns ; Lists of maps of certain types, e.g. manuscript or town maps (usually of a specific area); Gazetteers ; Dictionaries of mapmakers and cartographic terms ...
Web Sites	Library Hub Discover https://discover.libraryhub.jisc.ac.uk In a single search you can discover (some of the) holdings of the UK's National Libraries (including the British Library) and of many university libraries and specialist research libraries. Map History / History of Cartography Website www.maphistory.info/ Lots of invaluable information on, e.g. conferences, talks and exhibitions, fellowships and prizes, map collecting and collections, map catalogues, email discussion lists, societies, thefts, forgeries, links to images of early maps, and much more. Includes section entitled Books to get you into the Subject at www.maphistory.info/litgen.html