



SOCIETY OF
ANTIQUARIES
OF LONDON

The Library, Archive, and Museum Collections

Information for Applicants

The Society's library at Burlington House is the country's largest research library for archaeology, architectural history and the decorative arts (especially medieval), material culture and the historic environment and contains books, archives, manuscripts, prints and drawings. Its origins go back to 1718 when the Director was ordered 'to provide us a box to lay up the books in', and in 1719 the first book was purchased.

An Overview

Archives

The archives consist of membership records, records of specific activities related to the Society's purposes, and administrative records. They have not yet been assessed and arranged fully, nor is a comprehensive records management system yet in place. The paper records are known to consist of c. 60 linear metres of records from the early 18th century to the present which will be preserved permanently, with a further c. 60 linear metres of material, from the late 19th and 20th centuries, all of which requires sorting and appraisal, with the expectation that a substantial proportion will be preserved permanently.

The former are the central records of the Society's history and activities and include:

- Minute books of Ordinary Meetings from 1718 (57 volumes); Council books from 1754 (17 volumes and 1 binder); Executive Council Minutes from 1853 (14 volumes and 1 binder) and of the Society's Standing and other committees, mainly 19th-20th centuries
- Charters and deeds, 1751-2005 (4 boxes, 2 volumes)
- Documents relating to the Fellowship: lists of Fellows, from 1717 (20 volumes); election and admission of Fellows from 1758; candidates for election from 1811; obituaries, from 1933 (14 boxes, 4 volumes)
- Financial records, from 1718 (99 volumes, 4 boxes, 3 files)
- Publication distribution books, 18th cent – 1852 (12 volumes)
- Visitor books, from 1842 (27 volumes) - these document attendance at the Society's Thursday evening meetings.
- Correspondence with the Society's Secretary, and papers submitted for reading at meetings, 1707 – 1947 (72 boxes)
- Printed circulars, 1827 – 1975, (9 volumes).

The latter are currently housed mainly in the Archive Room, accessible only by ladder. Some continue existing record series held in the Muniments Room. Others are working papers and files, which reflect the gradual departmentalization of the Society's administration over the course of the 20th century. They include:

- Assistant/General Secretary's files

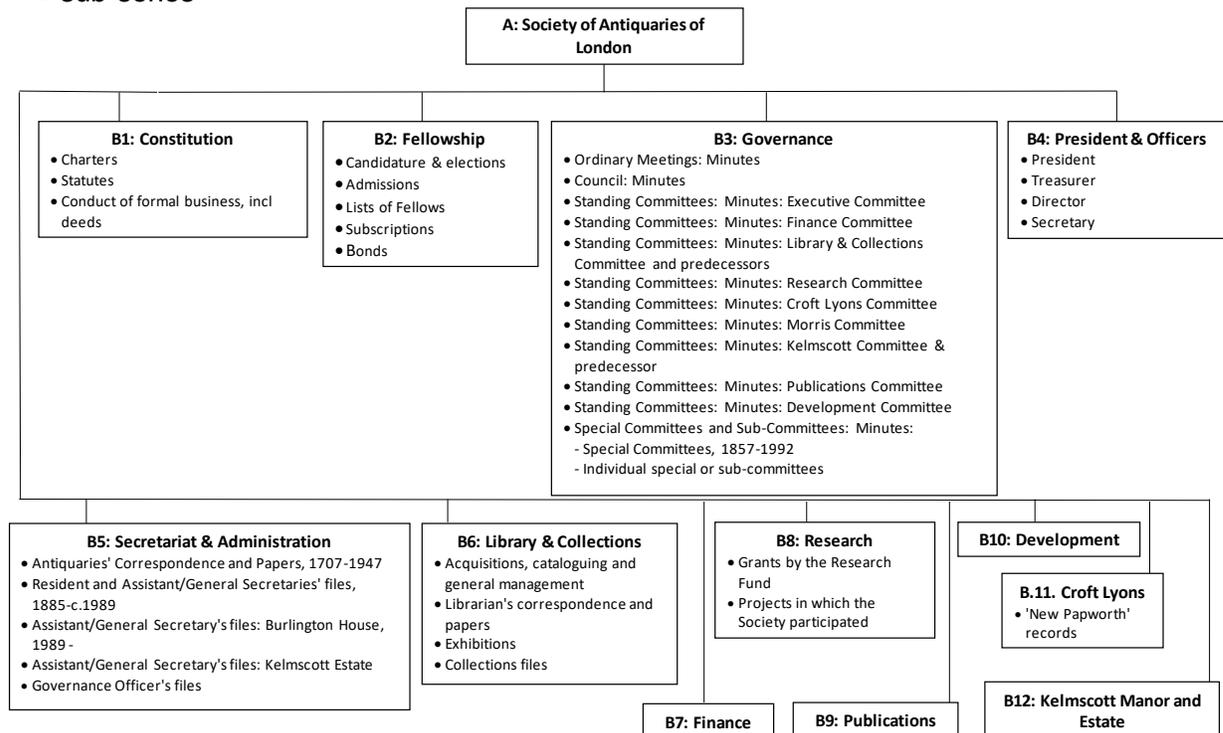
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- Named funds and bequests including Croft Lyons and Morris
- Research committee, research funds and grants, specific projects including Stonehenge
- Library and collections records
- Records of exhibitions
- Publications records
- Council papers: Register of Trustees' Interests
- Staff files on pensions and salaries
- Fellows records
- Committee records
- Financial records
- Burlington House records (relating to the Society's tenure of its Apartments)
- Kelmscott Estate Records (relating to the Society's ownership and management of the estate since 1962).

The archives have not been catalogued and there are few printed and electronic finding aids (none online). There are partial indexes to minutes of Ordinary Meetings (1718- 1921) and Council meetings (1754 - 1862). There is also a partial, typed transcript of the minutes of Ordinary Meetings (1718-1773) and a microfilm of the early Minute Books (1717-1817). The archives have not yet been assessed and arranged fully, nor is a comprehensive records management system yet in place. The whole archive requires sorting and appraisal.

The archive structure is as shown below, with the levels indicated as:

- A = fonds
- B = sub-fonds
- = series
- = sub-series



Manuscripts

The Society has a small but important collection of just over 1,000 manuscripts with items ranging in date from the 10th to 20th centuries. They relate especially to antiquities, British history and heraldry and include items ranging from a copy of the 3rd edition of the Magna Carta, the Inventory of Henry VIII, several illuminated manuscripts to large 18th and 19th century personal collections, such as the Prattinton Collection on Worcestershire, Jackson Collection on Wiltshire, and Willson Collection on Lincolnshire.

A printed catalogue to the manuscripts collection was published in 2000. Most accessions since 2000 have been listed but not fully catalogued and information about them is available only in the library. Although data from the published catalogue was incorporated into the Access to Archives online database of the UK archives network (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a), the Library does not have its own online catalogue. Most of the personal collections are stored in the Muniments Room while the manuscript books are kept in glazed, locked cabinets in the Admin Office, in direct sunlight and subject to changing environmental conditions. Occasionally, part of a collection is located in Upper Mezzanine Room 2. The circumstances of deposit of some personal collections, together with their ownership status is unclear. We have recently managed to secure transfer of ownership for one collection and have returned another, but the ownership status of the JA Goodall papers remains unsolved. Until this is resolved, the collection cannot be formally accessioned, catalogued, or be made accessible to researchers. In the meantime, this vast and complex collection requires a lot of storage space.

This collection sits across Library and Archival collections. While personal collections are truly archival, many of the manuscript books would normally be considered special library collections. However, as they have historically been catalogued as archives the records we have exported from the Access to Archives online database are being migrated to the Archives module of Collections Index + (the Society's new software for Archives and Museum collections).

Printed materials

The Library has much that cannot be found elsewhere. There are about 130,000 books from the 15th century to the present day. The main subjects covered are British and European archaeology, architectural history, the historic environment. British local history, early decorative arts, and heraldry. Special collections include 2,000 proclamations and 1,000 broadsides from the 15th to 19th centuries, the Lowther collection of 1,400 Civil War tracts, and the Fairholt Collection on pageantry, to name just a few.

Periodicals

There are around 3,000 current and historic British and foreign periodicals and series publications. The Library has had exchange arrangements since the mid-19th century and consequently is strong in foreign journals not available elsewhere. Another of its strengths is a comprehensive collection of British county historical and archaeological journals and record society publications.

Museum collections

The Society has an Accredited museum collection at Burlington House comprising ca. 40,000 objects that are pre-eminent for the study of the history of collecting, together with the discipline of archaeology and related historic material culture studies in Britain and other countries. The

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core collection spans the prehistoric period to the 19th century, and predominantly represent the history, archaeology and art of the British Isles. The collection is managed by the Museum Collections Manager.

It includes some 25,000 prints and drawings, dating mostly from the 18th and 19th centuries. These represent one of the largest collections on British topography and antiquities in the country. It can be divided into prints and drawings commissioned and published by the Society, gifts and bequests, manuscripts with drawings, illustrations in the Society's minutes, extra illustrated books, and photographic collections including the Society's own collection of lantern slides.

There are also important collections of brass rubbings, seals and bookplates.

The Society also owns Kelmscott Manor, Oxfordshire, the country retreat of William Morris, writer, designer and craftsman.

Library Services

In normal, non-Covid times, the Library is open Monday to Friday to researchers, both Fellows and non-Fellows.

Library staff undertake enquiries in person, by phone, fax and letter and by email. Enquiries vary from the straightforward to complex subject enquiries. Enquiries about the museum collections are dealt with by the Museum Collections Manager. The Archivist will deal with enquiries about the Archives and Manuscripts.

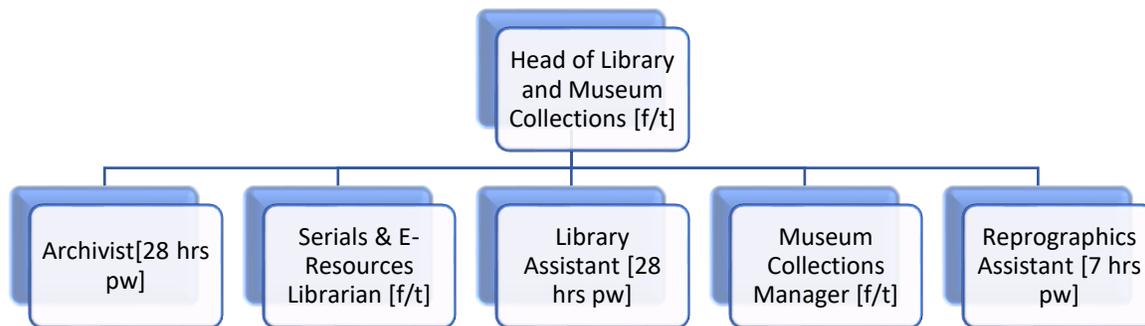
There are online catalogues to the printed materials, drawings and museum collections which can be searched from the library pages of the website <https://www.sal.org.uk/library/catalogues/>. Catalogue records for printed materials are also included in JISC's Library Hub Discover. Records of the manuscripts collection are available through the National Archives Discovery tool. All other finding aids are still paper-based and available in the Library.

Fellows can borrow books and are provided with remote access to over online resources.

The Library provides a photocopying/scanning service, and also deals with image requests.

Library and Collections staff

The Library and Collections team comprises the Serials and E-Resources Librarian and a Library Assistant. Two new posts have been created: an Archivist and a Reprographics Assistant (the latter will provide our Image Request Service). The Museum Collections Manager is responsible for the museum collection at Burlington House.



Applications

This document forms part of an application pack which can be downloaded at www.sal.org.uk/vacancies or by emailing admin@sal.org.uk. A job description, person specification and application form are in the application pack.

Please send your completed application form addressing the person specification and details of two referees (one from current or most recent employer) to the Head of Library and Collections at Society of Antiquaries of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, W1J 0BE or by email to admin@sal.org.uk

Completed application forms will be the only means of application considered

Deadline for applications and interview dates are given in the job advert.