

Archive Services at the City of London

The City of London manages outstanding archive resources, with some 80 kilometres of research materials covering almost 1000 years of the capital's history. They include not only the archives of the City Corporation itself (dating back to 1067), and many of the livery companies but also those of thousands of London based organisations, from the Greater London Council to over 800 City and metropolitan Church of England parishes. These collections, officially designated by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council as being of national and international importance, are used by tens of thousands of people every year from every walk of life, for all kinds of reasons – academic research, legal and business enquiries, tracing one's ancestors, illustrating history lessons, writing books. Access to the archives, depending on their origin, has in the past been delivered by three separately managed City organisations and from three sites, London Metropolitan Archives in Clerkenwell, the Corporation of London Records Office at Guildhall and Guildhall Library Manuscripts Section.

These three services are now being amalgamated to form one coordinated archive service under the name London Metropolitan Archives. We have already started bringing together the staff to form a single team and have begun developing unified approaches to acquisition and cataloguing, most recently in the areas of business archives and for the Church of England diocesan and parochial collections. We have also moved the former Guildhall Prints and Maps collection to the Clerkenwell site and it is being developed there alongside the metropolitan holdings to create a major new graphic collections centre.

These links across all our holdings have led us to review how best to make access to these archives as coordinated and straightforward as possible for all our users, both on site and remotely. While this has inevitably had to be assessed against the need to consider financial savings in the current serious economic situation, we have made arrangements which I believe will be to the long term benefit of all our researchers.



By Easter 2010 we will be **concentrating physical location and access to archives at the London Metropolitan Archives** site in Clerkenwell. LMA has been redeveloped significantly over the past two years; the purpose-designed public research facilities there are excellent and are supported by expert staff, conservation studios and high quality copying facilities. In early 2010 a new permanent exhibition area will be opened and over the following two years we will be introducing a dedicated area for studying our audio-visual collections.

In parallel two developments to make our archives more widely available through the digitisation of key material are moving forward. A digitisation agreement with Ancestry means that increasing quantities of more popularly consulted documents, such as parish registers, are now available online as high quality facsimiles with much improved indexes. When the project is completed there will be information available on over 77 million people who have lived in the City and Greater London over the past 400 years. At the same we are planning a programme to digitise archive resources regularly used by the academic community. This will build on earlier projects such as Old Bailey Online and will initially cover documents currently already available on microfilm such as the mediaeval archives of the City of London collections and modern series such as the Middlesex Deeds Registry (1709-1938). We will then be working with scholars in a number of academic disciplines to agree future collections to digitise. Alongside the existing access to such resources at LMA we are also creating a digital research base at Guildhall Library where all the City's digitally held archival sources referred to above will be accessible free of charge.

We do recognise that for some users it will be more convenient to work at Guildhall, particularly in the case of some archives (such as the Lloyd's of London and the Stock Exchange collections) where it may be essential to consult them alongside printed material there. We have arranged that **archives formerly in the care of the Guildhall Library Manuscripts Section will also be made available on request at Guildhall Library** in the Rare Books consultation area. Exceptions will normally be where documents are too fragile or large to be transported safely across London or already exist in surrogate form.

Further details on these developments, and particularly how to access archival material at Guildhall, will be available by the end of January on our website or by contacting the archives enquiry team based at Clerkenwell. The enquiry team can be contacted by email on ask.lma@cityoflondon.gov.uk or by telephone on 020 7332 3820 (Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.45pm).

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