



History Dissertation Workshop

Finding primary source material in Special Collections

General

Up-to-date information about the Special Collections Department (collection descriptions, manuscripts search, opening hours, exhibitions pages, etc) is at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/specialcollections/>

You can navigate to the Special Collections homepage by selecting the Special Collections button at the foot of the library's homepage.

Useful resources on the Special Collections web pages

Collection descriptions

Each of the collections is described fully along with guidance about how to find material (including links to relevant catalogue records) at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/specialcollections/collectionsa-z/>

Browsing through these descriptions can help give you a 'feel' for the kind of material available in Special Collections, but use the subject index (follow link on left toolbar 'Search by subject') to ascertain which of the collections might be of most relevance to more specific topics: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/specialcollections/searchbysubject/>

Collections that might be of particular interest for pre-modern history dissertations:

- [Chapbooks](#): recreational reading of the poor in 18th & 19th Centuries
- [Ferguson](#): includes substantial collection of witchcraft literature
- [Hunterian](#): wide ranging 18th century library (early books/medieval manuscripts)
- [J.S.C.](#): pamphlets, broadsides & books from 1690-99
- [Murray](#): collection strong in west of Scotland regional history
- [Ogilvie](#): English civil war pamphlets
- [Smith \(ephemera\)](#): cheap print and popular publications from 18th & 19th Centuries
- [Spencer](#): Darien scheme
- [John Stirling Papers](#): Scottish affairs, 1684-1726

Collections that might be of particular interest for modern history dissertations:

- [Bissett](#): left-wing pamphlets, largely published in Glasgow
- [Broady](#): Socialist pamphlets, election manifestoes and posters, 1930s-1950s
- [Caricatures](#): Franco-Prussian War, Paris Commune of 1871 and the 1870s

- [Gautherin](#): Vichy France
- [Christina Hunter Lawson Papers](#): every day life in Edinburgh, 1910-1963
- [MacCallum Scott Papers](#): politics during World War I and 1920s
- [Schlesinger Papers](#): Soviet history & German communist party
- [Trotsky](#): works (including articles and newspapers) by and about Trotsky

Exhibitions and Teaching & Learning materials

The **virtual exhibitions** can provide a useful starting point for searching for material by subject. A list of exhibitions mounted is available at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/specialcollections/virtualexhibitions/>

Some exhibitions that might be of particular interest to historians:

- [Americana](#) relates to the history of the Americas
- [The Damned Art](#) highlights books relating to the history of witchcraft and demonology
- [The Ephemera of John Smith](#) introduces a selection of ephemeral items giving a broad picture of daily life in Glasgow in the first half of the nineteenth century
- [Scottish thought & letters in the Eighteenth Century](#) highlights books illustrating the ideas & work of the Scottish Enlightenment
- [Women and Books](#) examines women and the written word from the sixteenth century onwards
- [The World of Chaucer](#) provides information about and images from some of our medieval manuscripts

More in-depth articles on specific books may be found in the book of the month archive at our [book of the month archive](#). Note that each article has a listing of other items of interest at the end.

Some book of the month articles that might be of particular interest to historians:

- [Belägerung der Statt Ostende](#) (Sp Coll RF 875): on the siege of Ostend
- [James VI and I Speeches](#) (Sp Coll Bf72-e.5)
- [Historia de Tlaxcala](#) (Sp Coll MS Hunter 242): on the history of the province of Tlaxcala from the beginning of the conquest of the region by the Spanish
- [The Aldgate Cartulary](#) (Sp Coll MS Hunter 215): documents relating to medieval London
- [Archbishop James Sharp Letterbook](#) (Sp Coll MS Gen 210): on the history of the Covenanters
- [Chronicles of England](#) (Sp Coll Hunterian Bv.2.17): 15th century version of history
- [The Fifth annual report of the Magdalene Institution](#), Glasgow (Sp Coll BG54-c.11): on Victorian control of 'wayward' women
- [Newes from Scotland](#) (Sp Coll Ferguson Al-a.36): early tract on Scottish witchcraft
- [Rider's British Merlin](#) (Sp Coll BD1-l.10): an annotated almanac from 1701
- [Official Guide & Daily Programmes](#) (Sp Coll Mu25-a.29): from the Glasgow International Exhibition 1901

The **Teaching and Learning material** pages have been set up to support the teaching of specific courses and new pages are continually being added:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/specialcollections/teachingandlearningmaterial/>

See particularly sections for History, History of Art and Social & Economic History.

Teaching and Learning material pages specifically set up for historians, include:

- [Scottish criminal records in Special Collections](#)
- [The development of the state \(text\)](#)

- [Scottish tourism and leisure in the nineteenth century](#)
- [The History of crime and punishment in Britain, 1790-1870](#)
- [Glasgow broadside ballads](#): cheap print and popular song culture in nineteenth-century Scotland

Finding resources using library search

Manuscripts Search

Some 60,000 **unpublished** items are indexed on the manuscripts search at: <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/manuscripts/search/>

You may search via name, document or collection: for more guidance see the [help page](#) (from the drop down menu at the left of the screen).

Some search strategies: -

- to find any items relating to **James I**, use the Name Search option, typing 'James I' in the top name box
- to find any items produced in the **eleventh century**, use the Document Search option, typing '1000' in the Year of Creation after box and '1099' in the and before box
- to find any items relating to **World War One** use the Document Search option, typing 'great war' in the first Word (or Phrase) in Description box; change the linking operator to 'or' and type in 'world war one' a second Word (or Phrase) in Description box (change one of the default settings in the boxes by clicking on the down narrow key next to the search term to do this). Run separate searches using other appropriate keyword phrases such as 'first world war', 'Somme', 'western front' etc.

NB: Use the **Word (or Phrase) in Description** box for keyword-type searches; note, however, that the manuscripts catalogue is not subject indexed, and successful searches therefore rely upon matching words that have been used in the descriptions section of the record. Be prepared to use lots of different keywords, including variants of spellings and synonyms.

Rare books search

Records for all the **printed** material held in Special Collections are indexed on the rare books search: <http://eleanor.lib.gla.ac.uk/search~S15/>

Use the **Advanced Keyword** Search option to limit searches:

- to find any books relating to **witchcraft published before 1736**, use the Advanced Keyword Search option, typing 'witch' in the main search box and '1736' in the Year: Before box in the Optional Limits section; try the same search using 'witches', 'demon', etc as keywords.

There are separate indexes available for the extra fields provided in the catalogue records for pre-1800 rare books. These fields include details of **early printers and booksellers, places of publication in standardised form, provenances and standard references**:

- to find any books published in **Mainz** in the **fifteenth century**, type 'mainz 14' in the rare books search box (at the bottom of the main catalogue menu amongst the 'Other search' options)

In describing rare books, we pay special attention to '**copy specific**' features, looking in particular at: bindings; evidence of previous ownership (bookplates, presentation inscriptions etc); evidence of previous use (manuscript annotations/corrections/inserted letters etc); and embellishment (added decoration/illustrations).

Such information can be crucial to book historians, who answer questions about the cultural importance, transmission and impact of these objects by examining copy specific details. You may retrieve this information by using rare books search. For more details on how to do this see our [copy specific search guidelines](#).

NB. There are also separate searches for:

- the Scottish Theatre Archive: <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/sta/search/>
- Scottish Chapbooks: <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/chapbooks/search/>
- Glasgow Incunabula Project: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/specialcollections/incunabulaproject/>

Printed catalogues and guides in the Special Collections Department

Sheaf binder indexes

While most of the records for Special Collections material are now on-line, there are additionally a number of (incomplete) indexes available for consultation in the reading room. These include a partial subject index, and indexes of newspapers, maps and views, ephemera, broadsides and chapbooks. Although these are no longer kept up-to-date, they can still provide a useful starting point by subject.

Exhibition catalogues

A series of old exhibition catalogues of Special Collections material are also available for consultation in the reading room; again, these are useful for a subject approach.

Reference material

There is a small collection of reference material in the reading room, including (mostly superseded) printed catalogues, guides and hand lists to some of our named collections, as well as some guides and descriptions of other Special Collections. These printed catalogues can sometimes be handy for quick reference but use with caution – some of the holdings information may now be out of date (in some instances, call numbers of collections have changed, for example).

Fiche catalogues

In searching for historical material, remember also to check the older library catalogues (referred to as 'catalogues two and three') available on fiche on every level of the library. Much of the material listed will now be housed in Stack or Store.

Contact

I am always happy to try and help locate relevant material and advise on best use of the collections:

Robert MacLean: Robert.MacLean@glasgow.ac.uk; 330 3792 (office); 330 6767 (Special Collections reading room).