THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT

Founded in 1830 to promote the advancement of geographical sciences, today the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) is a 16,000-member professional organization. Since its creation as a dinner club for informal scientific debates, the Society has been home to notable scientists, geographers and explorers who have helped understand and map the world as we know it.

Throughout its history, the Society has successfully advocated for the inclusion of geography teaching in schools and universities, and served as an information exchange for geographers, explorers, soldiers, administrators and naturalists, providing intelligence for academic and state endeavors.

PRIMARY SOURCE MAPS AND CHARTS DATING BACK TO THE 1400s

The digital archive is representative of the world’s largest private collection of maps and charts that is held in the Society building in London. Some of the most influential geographers of the last two centuries have contributed to the collection. Notable RGS members and contributors whose works can be found in this archive include Gertrude Bell, John Hanning Speke, David Livingstone, Robert Falcon Scott, Richard Francis Burton, Ernest Shackleton, and Edmund Hillary.

Most of the archive materials, now available on Wiley Digital Archives, have never previously been accessible outside of the Society.
INSIDE THE ARCHIVE
Spanning 1478 to 1953, the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) digital archive contains more than 150,000 maps, charts and atlases complemented by manuscripts, field notes, expedition reports, scrapbooks, correspondence, diaries, illustrations, sketches, and drawings. The archive collections include:

Mount Everest expedition photographs, field notes, records, illustrations, diaries and personal correspondence providing intimate insights into the journeys of scientists and geographers, beginning with the first British expedition in 1921 and including Edmund Hillary’s first successful ascent in 1953.

Historic images, documents and notes from the great Antarctic explorations of Robert Falcon Scott and Ernest Shackleton – even including photographs of Shackleton’s iconic Burberry® helmet.

Gertrude Bell’s detailed expedition reports, writings, illustrations and photographs, that gave many Westerners a window into the Middle East for the very first time.

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