

Collections within the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) archive

Founded in 1830 to promote the advancement of geographical sciences, the Royal Geographical Society digital archives contains more than 150,000 maps, charts and atlases complemented by manuscripts, field notes, expedition reports, scrapbooks, correspondence, diaries, illustrations, and sketches from some of history's most influential geographers and explorers.

The digitized collections within this archive contain materials and datasets which are especially valuable to researchers studying the history of geography, history of exploration, world history and politics, history of empire and colonialism, environmental studies and earth sciences.

Learn more about the collections:

EVEREST EXPEDITIONS

Mount Everest is the Earth's highest mountain above sea level and continues to attract many experienced mountaineers and climbers today. Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary made the first documented ascent of Everest in 1953, using the southeast ridge route. This collection contains thousands of images alongside a rich variety of primary sources covering decades of expedition history, especially the extensive planning behind exploration such as equipment, instruments, and clothing needed.

JOURNAL MANUSCRIPTS: NORTH AMERICA

This largely unpublished collection contains handwritten materials and manuscripts on the history of geographical research. The North American manuscripts covers key periods in US history before, during, and after the American Civil War. The papers, lectures and readings contain unpublished materials which could open up new research opportunities.

INDIA RECORDS

This collection contains essential resources on colonialism and empire through pamphlets, brochures, surveys and limited edition reports. Through the surveys on India researchers can read historical records of climate, engineering, and land-use in the region. Highlights of this collection also include voyage reports of Darwin's Beagle expedition, and a Pilot's guide to flying the English Channel from 1903 six years before Bleriot's first crossing in 1909.

MAP (CARIBBEAN REGION)

The RGS archive contains all kinds of maps from around the world, the Caribbean being just one example. Dates in this collection range from the 15th to the 20th century, tracking changes in borders, landscape, population movements and settlements. Many of the maps are geo-tagged, even those drawn by hand, and can be overlaid with current coordinates and downloaded as GeoTIFF files to use within GIS software suites.



THE NATIONAL ANTARCTIC EXPEDITION COLLECTION

Containing valuable resources relating to early 20th century exploration of the Antarctic, this collection covers the logistics and preparation of expeditions as well as documents relating to natural resources and geo-politics. Highlights of this collection include background documentation and photographs from Sir Ernest Shackleton's Endurance expedition. Also featured is correspondence relating to all aspects of expedition, especially planning and logistics.

RGS IMAGES ONLINE

The RGS images archive is one of the world's finest collections of photography, lantern slides and artworks, recording over 200 years of travel, people, places, and geographical discovery. Through its 15,000 global images, researchers can discover a virtual history of the visible world, humanity, and nature.

PAMPHLETS

The pamphlets collection contains a vast range of pamphlet material relating to global geographic and environmental science over a 200-year date range. Including historical meteorological observations, studies of flora and fauna, the anthropogenic change on the environment, ethnographic materials on indigenous communities, colonization and empire, and opinion pieces on a variety of environmental topics.

THE DAVID LIVINGSTONE COLLECTION

David Livingstone (1813–1873) was a Scottish missionary and explorer of Africa, whose opening up of the interior of the continent for trade contributed to the 'Scramble for Africa' and filled huge gaps in western knowledge of central and southern Africa. This collection of maps, photographs, correspondence and manuscripts is essential for researchers studying African studies, Ethnicity studies and the history of racism, European studies, Colonialism and Empire, and exploration during the Victorian era.

WORLD ATLASES

This unique collection of world atlases is complete from the late 15th to the 20th century, allowing researchers to track changes in borders, place names, and population across history. These world atlases are not available anywhere else and provide a wealth of opportunities for researchers interested in global politics and history, the history of maps and cartography, and all geographical subject areas.

CORRESPONDENCE BLOCKS

This includes a vast range of correspondence including materials from and to the Colonial Office relating to the administration of the British Empire, primarily 1830 through 1923. The correspondence blocks provide a rare glimpse into the inner workings of colonialism and empire in the Victorian and early Edwardian period.



RELATED SUBJECTS

- Agricultural Geography
- Anthropology
- Borders
- Cartography
- Climate Change
- Colonial, Post-Colonial & De-Colonization Studies
- Cultures & Identities
- Development Studies
- Earth Sciences
- Environmental History
- Ethnography
- Gender Studies
- Geography
- Geology
- Geopolitics
- Geo and Spatial Humanities
- Historical Geography
- International Law
- Trade & Policy
- International Relations
- Meteorology
- Nations & Power
- Physical Geography
- Resources & Land Use
- Urban Studies

TYPES OF MATERIALS

- Charts & Plans
- Expedition Reports & Scrapbooks
- Fieldnotes
- Correspondence
- Datasets
- Diaries & Personal Papers
- Fellowship Certificates
- Grey Literature
- Illustrations
- Sketches & Drawings
- Journal Manuscripts
- Maps
- Manuscript Maps
- Gazetteers & Atlases
- Monographs
- Photographs
- Lantern Slides & Artwork
- Proceedings & Lectures