British Government Documents for the Study of History

The University Libraries have a significant collection of Parliamentary Papers, Journals, and Debates, in print and on microform. In addition, the Center for Research Libraries (http://www.crl.edu) also offers extensive collections of British government documents. Recent British documents can be found online from 1994 to the present at the Stationery Office's web site: http://www.official-documents.co.uk/.

The following guide is designed to assist you in locating documents as primary sources in your research.

About


Biography


Guides and Dictionaries


Bibliography

Search *Historical Abstracts* online for articles, dissertations, and books published from 1955 to the present.


Statistics, Dates, and Facts


Elections


Almanacs and Annuals


*Statesman's Year-Book.* London: Macmillan, 1864-. MAIN, Latest in REF JA51 .S7 1893-.

*Whittaker's Almanack.* London: Whittaker, 1869-. REF AY 754 .W5 1937-.

Parliamentary Papers

Parliamentary papers consist of documents produced by and for the Houses of Parliament in the course of their work. Three broad categories of *House of Commons* papers are:

- **Journals:** the narrative of House actions
- **Debates** (often referred to as *Hansard* after their first printer): what is said in the House

House of Commons **Papers:** which consist of **Command** and other **Sessional Papers**

- **Command** papers are those reports printed by various government departments (such as annual reports or statistics) that the House commands to be printed.
- **Sessional** papers consist of Command papers, plus the bills, committee reports, returns (reports from various government agencies) and act papers (reports required from councils, boards or other agencies).

Guides


Collections


Parliamentary Papers can be borrowed from other libraries, including the Center for Research Libraries (http://www.crl.edu). Check with the History specialist if you are having difficulty in obtaining a specific document. In our area, the University of Texas, Louisiana State University, and the University of Oklahoma all have significant collections of Parliamentary Papers.

Catalogs and Indexes

The *Irish University Press* published in the 1970s a 1000-volume collection of nineteenth-century Parliamentary Papers on various subjects and geographical areas. While the University Libraries do not own this set of papers, their indexes are useful for identifying documents on particular topics:


Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)


*Parliamentary Debates (Hansard).*


Parliamentary Debates online:

Journals (Commons)


Journals (Lords)


Other Departments and Offices

General

Guides


The Public Record Office is the official depository for manuscript materials and documents of various agencies. Materials are organized and numbered by office and PRO documents are usually cited by abbreviated office name (e.g., Cabinet, CAB or Foreign Office, FO) and series number. Many important PRO series have been microfilmed and sold commercially; some materials may be available through Interlibrary Loan. In the United States, some of the best collections of PRO documents on microfilm can be found at Yale, Stanford, and the Library of Congress.


H.M.S.O. (Her Majesty's Stationery Office) Catalogues

The H.M.S.O. holds a license to print all government reports; these catalogs will list all items printed by authority of the government in particular time periods.


Published Compilations
There are numerous commercial compilations that reprint documents from a certain time period or on a particular topic. Notable examples in our collections include:

**Early English Books Online.**
This database offers page images of every book or broadside printed in England from the beginning of printing to 1700. Contains many royal or Parliamentary proclamations and bills.

**Calendar of State Papers – Colonial 1574-1739 on CD-ROM.** (At Ref Desk)
A "Calender" is a catalog of abstracts and actual transcripts of documents in chronological order. This set, originally published in 40 print volumes, includes more than 44,000 transcripts and extended abstracts from 1574 to 1739 between the British colonial offices and local government. The material covers a wide range of subject areas, including orders and grants from central government to local administration; the slave trade; piracy; agriculture; boundary disputes; administration; reports of conferences with Native Americans; plantations; immigration; land grants; legislation; industries such as ship building and fisheries; relations with French, Spanish Dutch, including intercepted letters; trade; privateering; war; and reports of court cases.


**Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages.** London: Longmans, 1858-. MAIN DA 25 .B5.

To find others, search InfoLinks under Word (your topic) + britain sources or + england sources, or by office name as author (e.g. great britain foreign office).

**Sovereign/Privy Council**
Published, abridged correspondence, speeches, and other documents from kings and queens of Britain can be found in our collection by searching under author, e.g.: elizabeth I.

The Privy Council developed during the 13th century as a small group of close advisors to the monarch, including the Treasurer, Lord Chancellor, Lord Privy Seal, and the Secretary of State.

Our library has a collection of Calendars of State Papers on non-opaque microcard (similar to very small microfiche), microfiche, and in print. Calendars list, abstract, and sometimes transcribe documents in chronological order. Most of the sets have subject and name indexes:

- **Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, and James I, 1547-1625.** 12v. PER-MOPAQUE DA 25 .F34.
- **Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reigns of Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1582.** PER-MOPAQUE DA 25 .H7 1861.
- **Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Commonwealth, 1649-1660.** 13v. PER-MOPAQUE DA 395 .A25 1649.
- **Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, James II, 1685-1688.** v.3. MAIN DA 25 .F4.


**Calendar of Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Elizabeth I.** v.3-5; 1563-1569. London:
Patent rolls list licenses, grants, patents, and monies awarded by the crown in chronological order, with general indexes.

*Calendar of State Papers – Colonial 1574-173.* On CD-ROM. (see above section for description).

**Cabinet Office**

**Collections and Reprints**


**Central Statistical Office**


**Colonial Office**

**Collections and Reprints**


**Indexes**


This is a reel guide for a commercially-published microfilm set; our library does not own this set, but you may be able to identify relevant materials to borrow on Interlibrary Loan through this index.
Foreign Office

About

Collections and reprints


Indexes and lists


India Office


War Office
(see also under Cabinet and Foreign Offices)


Other Documents, Manuscripts, and Archives


collections ("calendars") in public, private, and local archives.

Both publications list and reprint records of primary interest for genealogists: wills, marriages, and christenings, usually by parish or country.


Although they are narrative histories, and not indexes or bibliographies, the *Victoria County Histories* (MAIN-OV DA 670...) contain many useful references.