

Guide to using newspapers for research

1. Why use this guide?

This is a brief guide to researching newspapers and the history of the press. It will tell you where to start if you are looking for:

- newspaper collections
- archival records that shed light on the history of the press

2. Online newspaper collections

It is always best to start online if you are looking for newspapers. A growing number of websites provide access to digitised newspapers.

Search British and overseas newspapers online, for example:

- London, Belfast and Edinburgh Gazettes on [The Gazette website](#) (chiefly material for 1998 onwards, although some historic material is now being added (e.g., WW1 announcements))
- [The Times Digital Archive \(£\)](#), provided by Gale Cengage
- [British Newspaper Archive \(£\)](#)
- [17th and 18th century Burney Collection newspapers \(£\)](#) and [19th century British Library newspapers \(£\)](#), provided by Gale Cengage
- [Internet Library of Early Journals](#) (not updated since 1999 and a tricky one to search unless you know exactly what you are looking for)
- [Australian newspapers](#) on the National Library of Australia's Trove website
- [New Zealand Papers Past](#): more than three million pages of digitised newspapers and periodicals. The collection covers the years 1839 to 1945 and includes 90 publications from all regions of New Zealand.
- [Chronicling America](#)
- [Proquest Historical Newspapers \(£\)](#)
- [Time Magazine Archive](#)
- [Welsh Newspapers Online](#)

Some of the sites are free, but many are subscription-based (£) and offer subscriptions only to institutions, not to individual people.

You can access some of the sites in research libraries. Contact a library such as the [British Library](#) or [The National Archives' Library](#) to ask whether they have an institutional subscription.

3. Where can I find newspaper collections that aren't online?

Some libraries and archives have newspaper collections. Find regional newspaper collections in:

- [British Library Newspapers](#) - the main British copyright collection

- [The National Library of Wales](#)
- [National Library of Scotland](#)
- [Belfast Central Library](#)
- [National Library of Ireland](#)

Use the '[Find an archive](#)' tool to find the contact details of other libraries and local archives that hold newspaper collections.

4. Does The National Archives have newspapers?

The National Archives is **not** the best place to start if you're looking for newspapers, but we do have some newspaper collections.

4.1 Government gazettes

The National Archives has government gazettes - the official newspapers of former British colonies and British dominions.

To find colonial or dominion government gazettes, search Discovery, [our catalogue](#), using the name of the territory and the phrase 'government gazettes'.

Examples include:

- Jamaica (1794-1968) in record series [CO 141](#)
- Kenya (1908-1975) in [CO 542](#)
- Canada (1926-1978) in [DO 29](#)

They have not been digitised, but the originals are held at The National Archives at Kew. They all have the letter codes CO (Colonial Office) or DO (Dominions Office).

If you are in the reading rooms at The National Archives at Kew, ask to see the CODOFO paper index, which includes a list of colonial newspapers.

If you want to search the London Gazette it's always best to look on [The Gazette](#) website first, but The National Archives also holds an archived copy (1665-1986) in [ZJ 1](#).

4.2 Transport-related newspapers

The National Archives also has a large number of transport-related newspapers, magazines and journals. Try searching for the title in our catalogue, within the following departments:

- [AN](#)
- [RAIL](#)
- [ZLIB](#)
- [ZSPC](#)
- [ZPER](#)

There is also a card index compiled by British Transport Historical records (BTHR) in the reading rooms at The National Archives at Kew. Use the index to find references to all original documents and publications (including some references to overseas railways) up to 1972.

5. Researching the history of the press

Always start with published histories. Useful books and directories include:

- Encyclopedia of the British press by Dennis Griffiths (Macmillan, 1992)

- Read all about it! A history of the British newspaper by Kevin Williams (Routledge, 2009)
- Benn's media (1975-present)
- Willing's press guide (1928-present)
- Mitchell's newspaper press directory (1846-1907)

You can use [The National Archives' library catalogue](#) to find more histories of the press. Many books have been published on individual newspapers, journals and publishers.

Search the [Scoop!](#) database (£) to find out about British and Irish journalists, 1800-1960.

6. Archival records relating to press history

Search [Discovery](#), our catalogue, to find records from The National Archives and over 2,500 archives across the UK. You can search for a journalist, business or other keyword and your search results will display details from a range of archives. You can then refine your results.

Where the keywords you searched for appear in the description of a record, the search results are displayed under the 'Records' tab.

Where the keywords you searched for appear in the name of the institution or person that originally created the record (often not the same as the institution or person that currently holds the record), the search results are displayed under the 'Record creators' tab.

Archives holding relevant records include:

- [The Stationers' Company](#)
- [British Cartoon Archive](#)
- [Scottish Archive of Print and Publishing History Records \(SAPPHIRE\)](#)

The National Archives may also hold records relevant to your research - try searching for keywords such as 'newspaper'. You can also find whole newspapers, newspaper articles and cuttings which have been inserted into The National Archives' records. These have not always been catalogued, but it is possible to discover them by accident.

For further tips on searching see our [catalogue help](#) pages.

Guide reference: Domestic Records Information 123

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website: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/newspapers.htm>

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