

Using Special Collections

Guidance on handling material

All readers are asked to help preserve the items produced for their use by handling them very carefully.

- When an item is in use, please place it on a bookrest or flat on the table. If necessary, use paper-weights, weighted chains, or sheets of Perspex to hold it down; staff can supply these. Take special care that items do not hang over the edge of the table.
- Do not mark items in any way nor make erasures of any kind. Ink may not be used and bottles of ink, food, drink, and other potentially harmful substances must not be brought into the Search Room. Only pencils may be used for writing.
- The surface of items should not be touched except when unavoidable. Please do not lean on items, rest anything on them, pile one open book on another, or place open volumes face down. Permission must be asked to make tracings.
- Loose documents must be kept in the precise order in which they were issued. Do not remove items from files. Be careful not to obscure reference numbers when refolding or repacking items. Close one file or box before another is opened.
- Please avoid placing strain on bindings, which are often fragile. If you receive a book tied up with tape, please replace the tape when you have finished with the book.
- If you receive a book with uncut pages, ask staff to cut the pages for you. Do not try to open it yourself.
- Tell staff about any damage which you discover in items you are using.
- When in doubt on any point, please ask the staff for advice.

Requesting and returning material

- Please sign the Search Room day-book each day as you come into the Search Room
- Staff will be glad to give advice on the collections and the range of catalogues, handlists and indexes are available
- Readers should fill in a request slip for each item they wish to see and put them in the basket at the supervisor's desk
- Items will be fetched promptly when staff are available: if a delay is foreseen, we will let you know
- Items will normally be delivered to your seat, where cushions and weights may be supplied to support books and prevent damage
- Please tell a member of staff once you have finished with the item. If it is fragile, staff will remove it for you
- If a document or book appears damaged, please let us know
- Readers who finish with an item for the day but require it again within a week should return it with a blue reserve slip

- Items returned without a reserve slip will be re-shelved
- The number of files or volumes which a reader may have at one time will be restricted (normally three) and the number of items produced in one day may also be restricted
- If you want help, please ask.