

Research Guide

Nature



ARCHIVE
EXPLORED

Why Use This Guide?

With Earth as the theme for EYA this April, we've created a guide that celebrates nature. This guide highlights various archives connected to the natural world and showcases the fascinating materials you can find within them. We'll explore collections from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the Natural History Museum, and the Met Office.

You can usually find all the relevant information about opening hours and how to book appointments to visit archives directly on the site. For example, Kew is Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays between 10.00am - 4.00pm for pre-booked appointments only.

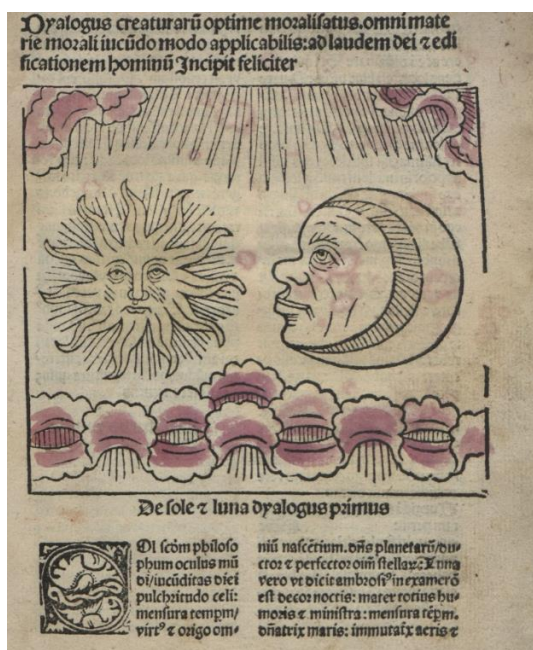
Most larger archives have online access to some of their collections, its best to have a look first to see what kind of things are available. However, it is highly unlikely that everything has been digitalised and available online so is still definitely worth visiting in person.



Met Office, digital archive and library, IL_Volcanoes_002_S

Many archives have research guides on their websites to talk you through navigating their collections. Reach out to archivists or staff at the identified archives. Discuss your research interests, inquire about access procedures.

Familiarise yourself with the archive's access policies, registration requirements, and any copyright restrictions that may apply to certain materials. Be prepared to provide identification and adhere to any preservation guidelines.



MET Office, digital archive and library, Dialogues on Meteorology and Astronomy 1480 (incomplete) p.1, D_M_A_1480

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew Archives

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew Archives house one of the most significant botanical collections in the world. With a history dating back over 260 years, the archives provide a window into the world of plant exploration, conservation, and scientific discovery.

The collections include official records documenting Kew's Garden, its long history, its staff and buildings, and the history of botany and plant-collecting. As well as personal papers from some of history's most influential botanists, including Charles Darwin, Joseph Hooker, and Marianne North.

Within the seven million sheets of archival material, you'll find correspondence, maps, plans, notebooks, records of plants received and sent out from Kew as well as photograph albums. The archive holds unpublished documentary evidence, such as correspondence, photographs, diaries and journals, notebooks on plant collecting, research papers, raw scientific data, maps, architectural plans, sketchbooks and posters—all of which help tell the story of how botany has shaped our understanding of the natural world.

As Kew continues its mission of plant conservation and scientific research, its archives remain a vital resource for historians, ecologists, and plant enthusiasts alike.

Kew's digital archives offer a wealth of materials for researchers and the public alike. You can access parts of Kew's digitalised collections via the links below:

Art UK – View a selection of Kew's botanical artworks and illustrations.

Biodiversity Heritage Library – Access digitised rare books from Kew's special collections.

Joseph Hooker Correspondence Project – Explore the digitised letters of this 19th-century botanist and explorer.

JSTOR Plant Science – Browse digitised records from Kew's Director's Correspondence Archive (1809–1928).

There is further info on how to search the Kew catalogue [here](#).



Kew digital archive, William Burchell Papers: Manuscript Catalogue of Brazilian Plants Vol 2: Colour chart, The Flora of Portugal, Madeira, Tenerife and Brazil, WJB/ 3

Natural History Museum Archives, London

The Natural History Museum's Library and Archives is a world-class resource for anyone interested in natural history, biodiversity, and the history of scientific exploration. The collections span centuries and contain more than one million items, including almost 400,000 books, 350,000 artworks, and over 100,000 catalogued archival items.

Physical items are distributed across the Museum's sites in South Kensington and Tring, as well as its remote storage facility. The collection includes original material, topographical and geological maps, photographs, monographs, and journals.

Archives The Archives primarily contain materials related to the history of the Museum, including correspondence, research notes, specimen accession registers, architectural plans, expedition reports, and staff photographs and portraits. These records provide a fascinating insight into the Museum's evolution and its scientific contributions over time.

Special Collections: The Library's special collections house some of the Museum's most treasured items, ranging from printed books and manuscripts to spectacular artworks. .

Tring: The Library at Tring holds the majority of the Museum's ornithology literature, including the magnificent Rothschild collection.

South Kensington: The Library at South Kensington contains a comprehensive range of materials closely aligned with the Museum's research activities and specimen collections. Its primary focus areas include taxonomy, systematics, anthropology, botany, entomology, mineralogy, palaeontology, and zoology.

The Museum's Library and Archives represent more than 120 women artists whose works span four centuries and cover a vast range of subjects. Many of their contributions have played a crucial role in advancing our understanding of the natural world.



Butterworth, Elizabeth. 'Watercolour Drawing of Lear's Macaw *Anodorhynchus Leari*'. N.p., 2005.

Online Resources and Archives

For those eager to explore cutting-edge research, the Museum's online repository provides free access to publications by its scientists, covering topics ranging from palaeontology to climate science.

The online catalogue for the NHM Archives is an invaluable resource for researchers, students, professionals, and members of the public interested in the history, development, and work of the Natural History Museum, London, and the NHM at Tring. It grants access to historical photographs, administrative papers, scientific illustrations, and publication artwork.

With over four million unique records and growing, the Natural History Museum's archives offer a treasure trove of materials documenting both the natural world and the work of the scientists dedicated to studying it.

The National Meteorological Archive

The Met Office holds one of the country's most comprehensive collections on meteorology in the National Meteorological Library and Archive. The collections include books, diaries, records, charts and other materials relating to meteorology, climatology and weather forecasting. These encompass official Met Office records, which date from 1854 onwards, older records and publications which illustrate the development of the science of meteorology, and the archive of the Royal Meteorological Society.

Examples of what is held in the Met Office's archive collection

- The original Beaufort Scale.
- Weather reports for the UK, every day from 3 September 1860 to the present.
- Weather reports from around the world.
- The great early writings on meteorology from such pioneers as Aristotle to Robert Boyle, Francis Bacon and Luke Howard.
- Marine weather logbooks - worldwide records from merchant and Royal Navy ships, including those from historic voyages such as of the HMS Prince of Wales when she attacked the Bismarck in WW2.
- Registers of meteorological observations and autographic records for approximately 1,000 sites - dating back to the mid-19th century. These cover temperature, wind, rainfall, solar radiation, snow and sunshine.
- The earliest weather diary from Rye (Sussex) for 1730-33.
- Historic images.

The National Meteorological Archive (NMA) in Exeter holds paper-based observation data for Met Office sites in England, Wales, and various international locations, including St Helena and the Falkland Islands. It also houses a significant collection of published materials, private weather diaries predating the Met Office's foundation, and international data from other meteorological services.

The following information provides guidance on locating and viewing these records.

Northern Ireland

Historical meteorological records for Northern Ireland, including pre-1921 data from before the partition of Ireland, are held at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). These records include daily registers, climatological returns, tabulated data, and autographic records.

Scotland

Meteorological records for Scotland, including Met Office data and early materials from the Scottish Meteorological Society, have been transferred to National Records of Scotland (NRS).

England & Wales

The National Meteorological Archive (NMA) in Exeter holds paper-based observation data for Met Office sites in England and Wales, along with historical materials from international locations such as St Helena and the Falkland Islands.

For Scotland and Northern Ireland, paper-based records remain in their respective countries and must be accessed in person, as most have not been digitised.

Please refer to the classification scheme via this [link](#).