

## Trade directories and telephone books at Guildhall Library

Guildhall Library has one of the largest collections of historic trade and telephone directories in the United Kingdom. Our main collection dates from 1736 although there is one “pioneer” London directory for 1677. The Library also holds a few 17th century Dublin almanacks on microfilm. The first national directory, **Bailey’s Northern Directory** was published in 1781 and the earliest surviving phone book was issued in 1880. However, the majority of our trade directories relate to the 19th and 20th centuries. These are not listed on the online catalogue, but details of our holdings are available at the Guildhall Library Enquiry Desk. A guide to **Historic Trade Directories in Guildhall Library** was published in 2005 and can be purchased in the Library Bookshop or online. A free typescript supplement, **Addenda and Amendments...**, (2005 to date) is also available. The guide lists directories for Great Britain, Ireland and the Channel Islands, but does not include our file of London and London Suburban directories, 1677-1991 or our historic telephone directories. Some early trade directories are classified as rare items and proof identity is required before these volumes may be consulted.

### Trade directories

This collection consists of directories compiled by a wide range of publishers and includes Kelly’s own annotated copies. The Library continues to add to the collection by purchasing items through the second-hand market or on microform.

Trade directories are an excellent source for tracing businesses and professions. From the mid-nineteenth century a separate Court section was included which lists private residential addresses. However, this is very selective and, in the case of **Kelly’s Post Office London Directory**, only included the “top 10,000 citizens”. **Boyle’s Court Guide**, 1792-1925, **Kelly’s Handbook**, 1880-1973, 1976-77 and the **Royal Blue Book**, 1823-24, 1826-35, 1837-1940 also provide details of London residents. Ordinary working people who did not own their own business will not usually be found in these directories. Many editions have useful sections covering official, municipal and public transport information as well as addresses for educational and religious institutions, hospitals and lists of clergymen, bankers, lawyers, etc. Maps, town plans and advertisements are often included although the latter tend to be limited until after 1853 when the tax on advertisements was abolished.

Directories for large industrial cities or spa towns like Bath were published with increasing regularity from the late 1760s and the first national directories date from 1781. Individual county and provincial town directories began to appear from c.1845 and local district/borough directories for Greater London from the late 1880s. However, some areas like Islington and Croydon have directories dating from as early as 1847. A series of **Post Office London Suburban Directories** was also issued between 1860 and 1932. **Kelly's** county directories ceased publication just before the Second World War, but town and regional directories continued until the early 1970s. The **Post Office London Directory** ceased publication in 1991 although its coverage of residential addresses and listings by street is limited from the 1980s.

Many of the trade directories are available in hard copy, but some are in very poor condition and have been replaced by microfilm. The Library has a complete set of London directories on microfilm, 1677-1991 as well as **National and Local Directories**, 1781-1817 and a wide range of provincial directories on microfiche. The latter are filed with the **Miscellaneous Microfiche** at Fiche 4 and Fiche 68 respectively. There is also a collection of directories on microfilm for Dublin and Edinburgh which supplement the volumes held in hard copy.

### Specialised and General Trade Directories

In addition to town and county directories, Guildhall Library has a range of trade directories relating to specific industries e.g. brewing, building, watch and clock making, electrical trades etc. General trade directories include: **Kelly's Manufacturers' and Merchants' Directory**, 1887-1986; the **London Directory and International Register of Manufacturers...**, 1898-1971 and the **City of London Directory and Livery Companies Guide**, 1866 onwards (this includes a commercial/trades section until 1915). Details of these directories are available from the online catalogue [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/librarycatalogue](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/librarycatalogue).

### Electronic Resources and Bibliographies

Guildhall Library subscribes to **Ancestry Library Edition** and this includes **UK and US directories, 1680-1830** and **British Phone Books, 1880-1984**. **Find My Past**, [findmypast.com](http://findmypast.com) also has a range of individual directories on its database and these include the **Medical Directory for Ireland, 1858**, **Dental Surgeon's Directory, 1925** and the **Bankrupt Directory, 1820-43**.

C.W.F. Goss, **The London Directories**, (London, 1932)

P.J. Atkins, **The Directories of London, 1677-1977**, (London, 1990)

J.E. Norton, **Guide to the National and Provincial Directories of England and Wales excluding London, published before 1856**, (London, 1950)

G. Shaw and A. Tipper, **British Directories, a bibliography and guide to directories published in England and Wales, 1850-1950; Scotland, 1773-1950**, 2nd ed., (London, 1997)

## Telephone directories

The collection includes London telephone directories and a range of national telephone directories from 1880. The latter are virtually complete from 1957 to date as publication was disrupted during the Second World War. The Library also holds files of telephone directories from the 1950s for Eire and the Channel Islands. Most of the collection is in hard copy, but some older material from the BT archives - **London and provincial phone books, January 1880 to July 1912** is only available on microfilm. The library also subscribes to Ancestry Library Edition and this includes **British Phone Books, 1880-1984**. From 1988 to 1998/2000 all our telephone directories were issued on microfiche, but this service has ceased and our files have now reverted to hard copy. Unfortunately, this has also resulted in the loss of some individual editions in our collection. The telephone directories are not listed on the Library's online catalogue, but are filed according to BT's own numbering system. Library handlists are available to identify the directories required as well as editions of the **Phone Book Index**. It is important to remember that phone books were published as part of a rolling programme and are not always issued every year. Telephone directories can be used to trace both private individuals and businesses and their coverage is determined by the number of subscribers to the telephone service. The early volumes, therefore, are of more limited use than the mid to late 20th century editions.

Early series of telephone directories cover both business and private addresses in the same volume. Separate classified telephone directories for London were published in 1938/9 and from 1947, but for other areas of the UK separate classified sections in phone books do not appear until 1968. London **Yellow Pages** are held from 1969 to date, but we no longer file **Yellow Pages** for the rest of the UK. Files of national **Yellow Pages** directories may be consulted at the Berkshire Record Office (repository for the BT Archive) and also the British Library.

## Copying from trade and telephone directories

Many of our early trade directories and, in particular, those published in the 19th and early 20th centuries suffer from very brittle paper and a fragile binding. Consequently, for conservation reasons any copying of pages is restricted to directories on microfilm and fiche or digital photography; photographer permits cost £2.50 and are valid for 1 day. In the case of telephone directories very limited photocopying by Library staff is permitted if the material is for presentation in Court.

## Other information

Guildhall Library is a public reference library and its collections are available to the general public without formality. It is open Monday-Saturday, 9.30am to 5pm (except for Bank Holidays and the Saturday of a Bank Holiday weekend).

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