

Harvard Map Collection

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The Harvard Map Collection is one of the largest and oldest collections of cartographic materials in the United States. It was formed with the gift of the Ebeling Collection of 10,000 maps and books in 1818. More history here (<http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/maps/history.cfm>).

Holdings

The Harvard Map Collection has grown to encompass 400,000 maps, 6,000 atlases, and 5,000 reference books. It includes: New England cartographic materials, rare editions of Mercator, Ortelius, and Ptolemaic atlases, large-scale current topographic maps for geographic areas throughout the world, maps of major cities of the world, early state maps, county maps, and town maps from the mid-19th century, early railroad maps, and Massachusetts maps.

Access

The Reading Room is part of the Pusey Library, accessed via the Lamont Library main entrance. Map Collection Reading Room Hours: Weekdays 10am-5pm.

A detailed schedule is here (http://hcl.harvard.edu/hours/unit.cfm?unit_id=6).

All researchers must register for a Special Collections Request Account. Register online here (http://hcl.harvard.edu/info/special_collections/index.cfm#started), or if you have an account, log in here (<https://aeon.hul.harvard.edu/>).

Finding: Digital Collection

The collection is not available for browsing (closed stacks) so here are the ways to find what you need and request it. **Only 1 percent of holdings are accessible in the Harvard Map Collection Digital Maps** (<http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/maps/digitalmaps/>). This online collection includes those raster maps and atlases that were scanned for specific purposes, leading to concentrations in Boston, Cambridge, MA, other Massachusetts towns, New England, London, China, fire insurance and real property atlases, and maps of the revolutionary war. Only maps that are out of copyright are included (currently before 1923 or so). They are available through the Harvard Image Delivery Service. These are transferred via WeTransfer or similar service for \$5 each for the full size scan. There is no charge for downloading smaller versions. Some tips:

- You can browse the collection in HOLLIS classic (http://lms01.harvard.edu/F/2RBY3G4CFUPBFV4F67EL5HB5EIVM4B6HX7VP6DD29VLF75DF6-13161?func=scan&=&scan_code=TIN&scan_start=Harvard+Map+Collection+digital+maps&pds_handle=GUEST). This is what the librarians use.
- Read more search tips from the map librarians, here (<http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/maps/digitalmaps/samples.html>).

Finding: Online Catalog

Forty percent of the map collection holdings are accessible in the HOLLIS online catalog (<http://hollis.harvard.edu/>). HOLLIS includes all materials received since 1990, all books, and a growing number of maps from retrospective cataloging projects. Pre-1900 materials cataloged since 1990 include the US east of the Mississippi, selected countries of Western Europe, cartographic rarities, and major cities of the world. Maps from the (non-Harvard) online Rumsey Collection are cataloged here too. Some tips:

- You can search using a keyword or subject search.
- Refine the “Genre/Form” to just “maps” or refine by location to “Map Coll (Pusey).”
- Narrow your search by: area (Canary Islands), theme (nautical charts, roads, subways), or date range (1900-1950).
- Search in Hollis Classic by “Call number (Library of Congress)”
http://lms01.harvard.edu/F/IC9G4HE3IGBHBSBSAFPXM1VCNE6SHRHKI1G7CDUVFQXN827D7-21291?RN=545629601&pds_handle=GUEST). Use if you found something from a previous search but want to see what’s next to it on the shelf (ex. “G3762.B68”).
- Atlases and reference books may be found in HOLLIS by searching for their author, title, or subject heading. Users looking for a particular geographical area can locate materials by searching for the name of the state or country. For example: Maine – Maps, or France – Maps.
- Request the item via “Request item” in the Hollis entry. After logging in, a New Item Request will automatically be populated with the correct information.

Finding: Reading Room

All holdings are accessible in the Reading Room in Pusey (accessed via the Lamont Library main entrance). The librarians have a vast knowledge of the collection, so make use of the librarian at the reference desk in the reading room. It is hard to beat personalized reference service for a 500,000 item collection. In person conversation is often better and more expedient than hours of searching in various catalogs or online databases. The physical card catalog also includes 100 percent of the collection. Some tips:

- The card catalog is part Library of Congress system and part Badger system. The card catalog = the shelf list. Ask the librarian if this is mystifying.
- The Harvard Map Collection holds electronic atlases ranging from road atlases to trip planners to historic atlases to state and country tourism guides.
- All requests should be entered manually into the online request form.

General Finding Advice:

- Whether you found an entry in HOLLIS or the card catalog, some single entries refer to sets with up to 3,000 maps. These are common for small town mapping, aeronautical maps, and topographic sets such as those from the USGS. These are browseable. Find the index map. Paper versions are located in a cabinet in the reading room. The gridded index will give you a number to look for the smaller area you want.
- Some books for reference and “decoding” are in the reading room. If you’d like more reference books, such as a book on the history of cartography or specialist books on certain cities, use HOLLIS or the card catalog and request online.
- There are finding aids for the nautical and hydrographic charts.
- Nautical charts from the U.S. office of the Coast Survey are coded with the same chart number for the same extents. For instance Boston Harbor will always have the same chart number, just with different publication dates.
- USGS maps are not cataloged, as all new and historical maps are online. Look at the indexes in the file cabinet to locate your map.
- Unfortunately maps are not searchable by scale.

Schedule Time at the Reading Room

The following are some ways to request items, plus rules and protocols while visiting the Map Collection Reading Room.

1. *Request items.*

All requests are entered online. Log in here (<https://aeon.hul.harvard.edu/>). Requested materials are pulled when you get to the reading room. Options:

- File a specific request for one map in Hollis or the card catalog. You will get that map pulled for you when you come in.
- File a request with an area (Canary Islands) + a date range (1900-1950) + the general call number from Hollis (MAP-LC G3762.B68). The librarian will pull the relevant material.
- Wait until you get to the reading room and consult the card catalog and/or a librarian.

2. *Sign in at the Reading Room desk.*

3. *Request a locker key from the reference desk librarian.*

Before accessing materials you must lock up: bags, briefcases, portfolios, backpacks, purses, books, library materials and drawing tubes, etc.

Allowed:

Small notebooks, pencils, laptops, cameras (no flash)

4. *Viewing.*

You are allowed one map or one folder at a time. One folder can be 1-20 maps. If you expect to return to look at the items, you can have items placed on the hold shelf for a week. It is usually cleared on Friday.

5. *Exit.*

All patrons' bags, briefcases, portfolios, backpacks, purses, and drawing tubes are inspected as users exit Lamont library. Please respect these rules as they are meant to protect the collection against damage and theft. Houghton Library had eight maps stolen by a prominent map collector, apprehended in 2005 after an X-Acto knife was found during his visit to Yale's map collection. Read more in the Crimson (<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2006/6/30/map-dealer-admits-to-97-thefts/#>). Additional reading room policies here (<http://hcl.harvard.edu/info/policies/index.cfm#hmc>).


Get a Copy

Digital scans: Free self-scanning using the KIC-2 overhead scanner. It scans up to 600dpi. It is great for atlases. Please see the librarian for permission before scanning any collection materials.

Dimensions allowed:

- Up to 24" x 17" (not folded)
- 24" x 17" (pre 1900)
- Books up to 32" x 24" (post 1900)

Staff Scanning (for fee, ColorTrac Gx+T42c color scanner)

- Items up to 42" wide, half inch in thickness maximum
- 300 dpi, JPG
- \$10 per scan. Payment is required in advance with a local check or [Crimson Cash](#).
- Users must sign a [Map Collection Scanning Services Agreement](#)  regarding licensing restrictions.
- The Harvard Map Collection is unable to perform any editing of scans.
- Large orders (approx. 30) can be turned around in a week
- You may bring in circulating maps from Cabot Library to be scanned

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Printing/Plotting Service

Materials up to 35.5" wide. Turnaround time is usually 24 hours. Printing is done in the reading room. The price for prints is \$2 per square foot for Harvard students, faculty, and staff. The price will be calculated based on the complete size. Payment is required in advance with a local check or [Crimson Cash](#).

Self-Print

HP Color Laser CP4525dn can be used. The fee is 5 cents a print.

Other Map Collections

Local print collections:

- Harvard [Cabot Library, map holdings](#)
- Boston Public Library, [Normal B. Leventhal Map Center](#)
700 Boylston Street, Copley Square, Boston, MA
617-859-2387

Reference and research by appointment:

- [Boston Athenaeum Map Collection](#)
10 ½ Beacon St, Boston, MA
617-227-0270
Appointments Tues-Fri 10-4pm

Other sources of historic cartographic materials:

- State archives

- Historical societies
- Museum archives
- Other University map collections
- American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA
- [Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division](#)

Online Resources

Scanned historical maps online:

- [David Rumsey Collection](#)
- [Old Maps Online](#), a meta-search encompassing many collections. Geographic search interface:
- [BPL](#)
- University of Texas at Austin, [Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection](#)
- [NOAA Historical Map & Chart Collection](#)
- [British Library](#)
- [Historical map sites](#)
- [Other map sites](#)

Reference Resources/ help reading old maps:

- [Dictionaries of cartographic terms](#)
- [Physical characteristics of maps](#)
- [Units of measurement, prime meridians, projections](#)
- [Biographical sources for researching cartographers](#)