Boston-Area Repositories

The library and archival resources available in the Boston area are enormous. Many of these repositories are listed below.

A search in Archive Finder can be limited to a city, e.g., Boston, or a state. More on Archive Finder.

Massachusetts Special Collections Directory lists major collections in several Massachusetts repositories. Search in the "Collection Description" field. For an example see Natick Historical Society record.

Lyman H. Butterfield's "Bostonians and their neighbors as pack rats". (American Archivist, v. 24 (1961), pp. 141-159) and Walter Muir Whitehill's Independent historical societies, an enquiry into their research and publication functions and their financial future give useful and enjoyable but somewhat dated overviews, more current information on particular repositories can be found in A guide to the history of Massachusetts (1988).

Massachusetts Library and Information Network (MLIN) offers links to Massachusetts library catalogs.

Specialized subject guides to Boston-area resources


Law School | Reference | KFM2478 .M46 1987
Law School | Special Coll Ref | KFM2478 .M46 1987
Widener | WID-LC | KFM2910 .M46x 1987

Guide to researching Boston buildings

HOLLIS record (with table of contents)
--Lengthy Note on Sources gives overview of records.

LOCATION: Fine Arts: RFA1231.2.4.1
LOCATION: Fine Arts: Harvard Depository RFA1231.2.4.1
LOCATION: Harvard Archives: REFERENCE
LOCATION: Loeb Design: Ref Desk NA735.B7 A72x 1983

LOCATION: Baker Business: Historical Collections T22.5.B67 S76 1984
LOCATION: Loeb Design: T22.5.B67 S76x
American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, contains over three million books, pamphlets, images, newspapers, periodicals, and manuscripts. The pre-eminent library for pre-1850 Americana. Their online catalog covers books, pamphlets, manuscripts, newspapers, lithographs, and broadsides. There is an online union Catalogue of American Engravings which describes engravings issued as separate publications or as illustrations in books and periodicals from the early eighteenth century through the year 1820. Their Nineteenth-Century American Children's Book Trade Directory documents individuals and firms involved in the manufacture and distribution of children's books in the United States chiefly 1821-1876.

Further Information:


LOCATION: Widener: US 27.5.10
Archdiocese of Boston Archives


**HOLLIS Record**

Boston Athenaeum (10 1/2 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108; (617) 227-0270) was founded in 1807. Important source for Boston-area history. Has large collections of photographs and prints of the Boston-area and of personal papers. Houses the records of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1780- ). Their online catalog, Athena, includes virtually all the books.


**LOCATION:** Law School: Special Coll Ref Z881.B74x 1990

**LOCATION:** Schlesinger: 010 B747n

**LOCATION:** Widener: WID-LC Z881.B67 B67 1990x and several other Harvard libraries

City of Boston Archives and Records (30 Millstone Road, Hyde Park, Ma 02136-2324; tel.: 617-364-8679, fax: 617-361-5729, By appointment only) includes city records, including health services records.

Boston College, John J. Burns Library Rare Books and Special Collections (Chestnut Hill, MA).

**Subject listing of the manuscript collection.** There are rich collections on Jesuitana, Ireland and Irish Americans, nursing, medical ethics, and street railways.


**LOCATION:** Widener: WID-LC BX3702.2.Z99 J64 x 1986

--The collection has more than doubled since 1986. Lists of post-1986 acquisitions are available in the John J. Burns Library.

**Boston Gas Company Records** contains approximately 4500 photographs, 1880s through the 1970s. About 400 images (1882 to 1972, mainly 1885 and 1910) are Internet accessible.

Boston Museum of Science, Lyman Library has the Boston Society of Natural History records and papers of associated naturalists.

Boston Public Library (Copley Square) houses one of the great research collections. The Research Collection is non-circulating. The online catalog of the Research Library goes back to 1974. There is an onsite catalog for earlier materials. Chief Boston-area source of patents information. The *Rare Books Department* web site includes an alphabetical list of collections. The *Special Collections in the Research Library* web site includes a list of special collections (manuscript, pictures, and rare books) alphabetically and by subject. The *Government Documents Department* has a *State & Local Government Documents Database* (largely 1980-1990) which indexes Boston and Massachusetts state government documents, with some publications of civic organizations and the University of Massachusetts.
Database (largely 1980- ) which indexes Boston and Massachusetts state government documents, with some publications of civic groups, research institutions, and public policy organizations. 

Holds the Boston Board of Health records (1799-1824)

Further Information:

LOCATION: History of Science:

Location: Botany Arboretum A B65
Location : Botany Gray Herbarium Bibl B65b 1983

Boston University, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center includes the History of Nursing Archives which holds papers of prominent nurses, records of nursing schools and organizations, early textbooks and other books and the Pascal Collection which includes 150 books by and about Blaise Pascal.

Further Information

LOCATION: Schlesinger: Ref. 010 B7476s

LOCATION: Widener: RR 3129.5.5

Bostonian Society has a large collection of printed, manuscript, and visual material on Boston history.

Brandeis University Special Collections Department and Robert D. Farber University Archives Brandeis University Libraries. Access to collections and reference assistance by appointment. Online lists of collections and finding aids are available Includes the Leonardo da Vinci Collection with books and pamphlets on Leonardo da Vinci's life, art and engineering work. Collection may be scanned through a subject search on Leonardo da Vinci and the Age of Discovery of about 4,000 books concerning Magellan, Columbus and other voyagers of the 15th and early 16th centuries. The collection is not in the online catalog; an author-title listing of the collection can be found in the Department's card catalog. There is a collection of Albert Einstein Papers (Correspondence)

Burndy Library. Formerly on the MIT campus. The Burndy Library has moved to the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Clark University holds the papers of G. Stanley Hall (1844-1924), psychologist and first President of Clark University and Robert Hutchings Goddard (1882-1945) member of the Clark Physics Department and rocket researcher.

Congregational Library holds extensive printed matter and archival records relating to the Congregational Church. Holdings include American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions material additional to that at the Houghton Library at Harvard (scroll down to ABCFM section).

Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site houses the Frederick Law Olmsted Archives which has an online guide.

General Artemas Ward House Museum

View objects from the Ward House in VIA by visiting, choosing “General Artemas Ward House Museum” in the “Limit Repository to:” box, and entering “objects” in the “Search for:” box. To view photos of rooms, use the search term “interior views.”
Historic New England archival collections include photographs (over 300,000), prints and engravings, architectural drawings, books, manuscripts, and ephemera. Formerly: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum documents the Kennedy Presidency. Holds the papers of the writer Ernest Hemingway.

Massachusetts Archives is the repository for the official records of the Commonwealth. Nearly all the collections are represented in ArchiveGrid by series-level descriptions together with numerous agency history records. Put "Massachusetts Archives" in the search field with your keywords to limit to this repository. There is no public web access in the Archives, however. Onsite service is via a printout of collection descriptions.

The Massachusetts Archives, the ancient archives of Massachusetts, was rearranged by subject by Joseph Barlow Felt in 1836-39. Access is via a very detailed card file and an online database.

There are several genealogical sources, including a microfilm index of Massachusetts birth, death and marriage records, 18xx-1971. Harvard has this microfilm, but for 1841-1895 only. Index gives year and town only. For full records go to the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics.

Massachusetts Archives holds records concerning public health, transportation, public works, etc. Houses records of the Metropolitan District Commission. Collections - Synopsis of Holdings

Massachusetts Archives Blog: From our Vault to you

Massachusetts College of Pharmacy's Henrietta DeBenedictis Library has a large collection of medical and pharmaceutical journals. Book collection extends into the 19th century.

Massachusetts Historical Society is an important source for Boston-area history. Has large collection of personal papers. Online Finding Aids

The MHS online catalog, Abigail, contains collection-level records for all MHS manuscript collections with links to many, but not all, inventories. Much post 1870s printed material, especially pamphlets, are not in Abigail. These are accessed via a card catalog. Records from Abigail are included in WorldCat. Manuscript inventories are included in ArchiveGrid.

Over 300,000 item level records are accessible via a microfiche set. This microfiche catalog is not exhaustive, but does usefully index the major collections. It supersedes the published Catalog of Manuscripts of the Massachusetts Historical Society (7 v., 1969 + Suppl. (2 v., 1980)).

Manuscript material available on microfilm must be used as microfilm. Some microfilms of MHS manuscript collections are available in other libraries. Records of these are included in WorldCat, and there is an outdated (1992) list available at MHS.


LOCATION: Widener: WID-LC F64.Z99 M37 1997x

Massachusetts Horticultural Society's Horticultural Education Center has a collection of books and periodicals founded in 1829, largely 19th-20th centuries, on botany and horticulture.

Massachusetts Water Resources Authority Library has large collection of historical documents, books and periodicals.

MIT Libraries are the best local source for technological literature. The MIT online catalog, Barton, includes everything back to 1963 and selected earlier material. There are several libraries, the largest being Bowdoin, the main library for technology. MIT was founded in 1861.
1963 and selected earlier material. There are several libraries, the largest being Barker, the main library for technology. MIT was founded in 1865. **Barker Engineering Library.** Historical collections are divided between the Institute Archives and Special Collections and the MIT Museum.

**Institute Archives and Special Collections** contains:

- MIT archives
- Manuscripts, largely personal papers of MIT faculty
- Theses
- MIT publications
- Oral histories
- Rare Book collection

Particular subject strengths of the Rare Book collection are in electricity, ballooning, aeronautics, glass and glassmaking, and nineteenth-century civil engineering.

**List of manuscript collections**

Visual materials are largely in the MIT Museum.

**MIT Museum**  
265 Massachusetts Avenue (Building N52), Cambridge, MA

Subject areas: aeronautics/astronautics, chemistry, communications, computing, crystallography, engineering, meteorology, photography, physics, etc.

- Bliss Instrument Collection contains 17th-20th century scientific instruments
- Young antique globe collection
- Cameras from the Harold E. Edgerton Collection.
- Department of Architecture drawings and theses (1840-1968)
- Holography Collection: holograms and archival material
- MIT history material: subject/biographical files (including alumni/ae obituary files) files and photographs

**Francis Russell Hart Nautical Museum**  
MIT Museum

Includes artifacts, books, models, marine art, and drawings and photographs on ship and small craft history, especially in New England (late 19th - 20th centuries). Records of the Department of Ocean Engineering.

**National Archives, Northeast Region**, Waltham, holds records relating to New England and selected microfilm of records at the National Archives in Washington.

**New England Historic Genealogical Society** is the major local source for genealogical research, family history, etc. There is a modest charge for use by non-members.

**Northeastern University, Archives and Special Collections, Boston History Collections** holds large archival collections documenting Boston history, especially social justice organizations serving minority populations.
Peabody-Essex Museum, Phillips Library, Salem, is the largest repository of historical records of Salem and surrounding Essex County (northeast of Boston). Holds a vast collection of local history, including papers and records of numerous local figures and organizations. Also large collection of maritime history, including ship's logs, of East Asian and Pacific Islands art and ethnography, and of local natural history. Holds the papers of the ornithologist Ludlow Griscom.

LOCATION: Widener: Widener Reference Desk File Drawer: History of Science

LOCATION: Museum Comp Zoology: Mus-W592
LOCATION: Tozzer: MUS.120.20.9.7
LOCATION: Widener: US 13437.1.30

Perkins School of the Blind's Samuel P. Hayes Research Library & Archives contains collections of documents, photographs, newspaper clippings, artifacts and other material related to the history of Perkins and the education of the blind and deafblind.

Roxbury Community College Library: Archives & Special Collections

Includes:


Massachusetts Experimental School System (M.E.S.S) also called Experimental School System of Massachusetts (E.S.S.M) records, c.1968-1975


Salem Athenaeum, Salem, holds library, captured by Salem privateers in 1780, of the prominent Irish chemist Richard Kirwan and supplemented with other works to form the Philosophical Library Company.

LOCATION: Widener: US 13105.1

LOCATION: Widener: BP 178.4

Simmons College Archives holds a Charities Collection (1790s to about 1950): annual reports and other publications of private charities, public welfare agencies, and hospitals in Boston, Massachusetts, the eastern United States, and England.

State Library of Massachusetts is on the 3rd floor of the State House. It contains the most complete collection of state documents, a large collection of material on Massachusetts, and on public policy in general. Their OPAC goes back to about 1975. Material acquired before the mid 1970s is found in the main card catalog. When the main card catalog was closed in 1978, the OPAC was not ready, so interim author/title and subject catalogs were made. There are many records for separately bound periodical articles and parts of books in the main catalog. Records in these are being transferred to the OPAC, but much, especially 1970s material is still only in the interim catalog.

There is a biographical card file behind the circ desk which gives brief (date, city/town, occupation) plus sometimes references to obituaries or material (e.g., photographs) held elsewhere in the State Library.

The periodicals section is upstairs. They have the Zimmer index in a staff area. It has been digitized. They have an extensive
Subjects: History
Research Services has two locations in the Central Library in Copley Square where staff can assist you with finding collections for your research.

Massachusetts Newspapers

Collection of Mass. Newspapers on paper and microfilm. Older papers are kept in the Special Collections.

Special Collections is in the West Wing Basement. It houses an extensive collection of maps and atlases, town histories, town reports and city directories.

Two groups of manuscript collections bearing call numbers beginning Manuscript (for single items) and MS Col. (for collections). Much of this material was transferred, as not being official records of the Commonwealth, from the State Archives. Manuscript collection includes a lot of Massachusetts military material. These collections are represented in the OPAC.

There is a vertical file, called the Burrill file, accessed through a printout of subject terms.

There is general book collection gathered largely during the 1820s-1870s (accessed through card catalog upstairs).

Special Collections is a good place to do research in Massachusetts landscape architecture, environmental history, historical preservation, etc., as the maps and atlases are available together with local directories, town reports and histories, etc. Special Collection houses considerable material on 19th century Massachusetts railroads.

Town reports collection and historical newspapers are listed on web site, not in OPAC.

Looseleaf binder contains “Of Massachusetts”, An Index of Illustrations and Articles on Massachusetts People and Places.

Indexes:
- Massachusetts Magazine, vol. 2, 1884-86
- Massachusetts Magazine, vol. 1-8, 1789-96
- Harper’s Monthly, 1850-1950?
- Massachusetts Magazine, vol. 1-11, 1908-1918

State Transportation Library contains a Historical and Newsclip File and the John Henry Ackerman Railroad Collection

University of Massachusetts at Boston

LOCATION: Schlesinger: Ref. 016.09 B872u, 1994

University of Massachusetts Lowell, Center for Lowell History, Special Collections includes manuscript/archival and visual collections on New England railroads, textile manufacturing, local medical agencies and institutions, canals, etc. List of special collection material available.

Wellesley College Library

LOCATION: Houghton: *93HR-6026
LOCATION: Sci Instruments: Z286.S4 W54

Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Archives & Special Collections, George C. Gordon Library, Worcester, includes the Alden Hydraulic Laboratory (1900-1960) records.
use, whether for the casual learner, for formal education support, or for scholarly research. Information about the community, how to plan a
vacation, or genealogical research into your family tree are all areas with which the Research Services staff can help. View this guide to
help you get started researching. For the best service, e-mail the library at ask@bpl.org in advance of your visit. The BPL has extensive
research collections available for use within the Library, including newspapers and magazines on microfilm, and government documents.

Boston College Libraries History and Memory in the Twentieth Century Professor Franziska Seraphim Librarian: Leslie Homzie 617 552
1907 [email protected] http://www2.bc.edu/~homzie/ Boston College Libraries Research Guides African & African Diaspora Studies:
United States history: http://www.bc.edu/libraries/research-guides/s-ushistory/ Quest (Boston College Libraries’ Catalog) To search for
primary text material This guide addresses the second purpose by outlining the functions and procedures of archives, and is designed both
for first-time archives users and scholars who have already conducted research in archives. The content covers: How archives function.
How to identify appropriate archives for your research. How to access historical materials and research at an archives. Repositories and
their collecting scopes and practices may differ, but the principles in this guide should assist you in accomplishing your research goals at
any archival institution. Table of Contents. What Are Archives and How