

STORYTELLING ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these notes is to help Storytellers and others interested in the art of storytelling, to find and use significant collections of materials. I have listed libraries that contain collections of stories, books about storytelling and folklore and other background material. In particular I have tried to identify archives that contain field recordings of traditional stories and storytellers. I have limited this fact sheet to libraries in the United Kingdom.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The wealth of material that is available through the local library service should not be underestimated.

You can join the library service where you live, study or work. You can use any public library for reference purposes. Most library services will have at least one main or central library which has the widest range and depth of material. It is worthwhile finding out how to use the library catalogue (which may be computerised) and even more useful to talk to the librarian about your interest.

Most libraries will be organised using the Dewey Decimal Classification system. The main numbers of interest are:

291	Religious Myths
375.82	Storytelling in Education
398	Mythology and Folklore
808.543	Storytelling (literature)

In most cases, if the library does not have the particular book you want, it can be borrowed for you on inter-library loan. The librarian will be able to help you check the details of any book you may want to find. Storytellers will find the children's library an invaluable source of collections of stories, modern versions of traditional stories and wonderfully illustrated versions which can inspire and enrich your understanding. If you want to browse in the children's library you should introduce yourself to the staff on duty; librarians have to be wary of adults 'loitering' in the children's area.

Most libraries have an audio-visual or music library and may stock recordings of storytellers. If your library does not hold this material the librarian will be happy to consider your suggestions for suitable material.

The British Humanities Index is an index for newspapers and magazines. In it you will find articles indexed under the headings Folk Lore, Folk Tales, Legends, Oral Tradition, Riddles and Storytelling.

NATIONAL LIBRARIES

The British Library and the national libraries of Scotland and Wales can be used as libraries of 'last resort', i.e. to gain access to books that are not readily available elsewhere. They also contain special collections including important manuscript collections. Much of their stock is available via your local library through the inter-library loans scheme. Further details and tickets are available from:

The British Library,
96 Euston Rd. London NW1 2DB
Tel: 020 7412 7676 www.bl.co.uk

Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / National Library of Wales
Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3BU
Tel: 01970 632 800 www.llgc.org.uk

National Library of Scotland,
George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EW
Tel: 0131 623 3700 www.nls.uk

LIBRARIES IN UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

You may find that a college or university near you runs courses on storytelling and/or folklore, in most cases their libraries will provide materials to support these courses. This material will be available to students on the courses but they may also be available to the public, possibly at a charge and almost certainly for reference use only.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

SOCIETY FOR STORYTELLING LIBRARY

The SfS Library contains an ever growing collection of folk tale collections and related resources. It is housed at Mythstories and is available during museum opening times, these vary depending on the season so you should contact them in advance to check current times.

Mythstories, The Morgan Library, Aston Street, Wem, Shropshire SY4 5AU
Tel: 01939 235500 www.mythstories.com

THE TINA BILBE COLLECTION

This collection of folktale collections, picture-books and related material contains over 2000 items and is still growing. It is currently housed adjacent to the Society for Storytelling office and can be used as a reference collection. Photocopying facilities are available subject to copyright conditions. Contact Tina Bilbé for a booklist or appointments.

Tina Bilbé
12 Belle Avenue, Reading, RG6 7BL
Tel: 0118 935 1381

LONDON CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING ARCHIVE

The LCIS archive of performance storytelling comprises over 900 audio recordings of storytelling performances, related talks and interviews collected since the early 1980s. The material collectively documents the redevelopment and revival of the performance aspect of storytelling in the UK and the international influences that have shaped and informed it.

Mythstories provides full access to this material. Gateshead Central Library and the Vaughn Williams Memorial Library provide access in a web page format and the National Sound Archive will be incorporating it into their database in due course.

www.thelcis.org.uk/LCIS/arcrigh.htm

FOLKLORE SOCIETY LIBRARY

The Folklore Society was founded in 1878 for the study of traditional culture. This includes customs and beliefs, narrative, drama, music, song and dance, language, foodways, arts and crafts and childrens folklore. The library houses the Norton Collection used by Katherine Briggs for the 'Dictionary of British Folk-tales'.

The library is accessible to members of the Folklore Society and students at UCL. Non-members may apply to the UCL issue desk for a day pass, but these are limited to two per year.

The library is stored by the University Colleges so it is vital that you contact them in advance to let them know what you wish to consult.

Folklore Society Library
University College London, Gower St. WC1E 6BT
Tel: 020 7679 2000 ext 7789 www.folklore-society.com

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

This is the library for the English Folk Dance and Song Society. The library covers British folk culture and elements of British based culture in other lands, particularly N.America and Ireland. Although it is best known for materials on folk song and dance it has a major collection covering folk-tales, myths, legends and traditional storytelling. There is also a sound library.

Use of the library is free to members of the English Folk Dance and Song Society who may borrow some of the material. Non-members are charged a daily fee for reference use only.

The library is open 9.30 am - 5.30 pm Tuesday to Friday
The sound library is closed 12.00 noon - 2.00 pm every day and the whole library is sometimes closed for lunch.

Vaughan Williams Memorial Library
Cecil Sharpe House, 2 Regents Park Road, London NW1 7AY
Tel: 020 7485 2206 www.efdss.org/library.htm

NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE

The National Sound Archive is the part of the British Library responsible for the national collection of sound recordings. This includes published recordings, broadcasts and unpublished material. The holdings of material relating directly to storytelling is limited but includes for example recordings of the 1989 International Storytelling Festival in London. However the collections on oral history, drama and literature make it a valuable resource. The library can be used by anyone. There is no charge and no need for a users pass. The library is open 10.00 am - 8.00 pm Monday to Thursday. Friday early closing 5.00 pm.

British Library National Sound Archive
96 Euston Rd. London NW1 2DB Tel: 020 7412 7676 www.bl.uk

ST FAGANS NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM

The Welsh folk museum library holds collections of Welsh folk customs, lore and tales, and selected books about the folk tale as a genre. The archive contains much primary source material relating to folklore, the material is nearly all in Welsh. There is also a sound archive containing over 7,500 field recordings of information about Welsh folk life including a selection of folk narratives. English translations and background notes are available.

The library is open 9.30 – 1.00 and 1.45 – 4.30 weekdays. Admission is granted to bona fide researchers by prior arrangement. To use the library contact the librarian, several days notice may be needed to access some items.

Welsh National History Museum Library, St. Fagans, Cardiff, CF5 6XB
Tel: 029 2057 3500 www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans

SCHOOL OF SCOTTISH STUDIES

This is a specialist sound archive which includes the largest body of traditional storytelling on tape in the British Isles. Most of this is in Scots Gaelic including the long hero-tales. The collection also holds recordings of lowland Scots travellers, including the original tapes for all of Duncan Williamson's published collections and most of those from other travellers, Jeannie Robertson, Betsy White, the Stewarts of Blair, Willie MacPhee, Stanley Robertson and others. There is a good deal from the rich dialect tradition of Shetland and Orkney. There are a number of manuscripts, nearly all of Gaelic tales, and a small collection of films and video-tapes.

The School of Scottish Studies aims to make this material available to the public by publishing collections of stories. They are in the process of making the database accessible on line; examples are already available at www.pearl.arts.ed.ac.uk

Direct access to the collection is available by appointment. Application should be made to the archivist or the sound archivist, depending on which area of the archive you wish to access. For any extensive use of the material the permission of the storytellers or their heirs would be required.

School of Scottish Studies
The University of Edinburgh, 27 George Square, Edinburgh, EH8 9LD
Tel: 0131 650 4159 www.celtscot.ed.ac.uk/archives.htm

THE VERBAL ARTS CENTRE ARCHIVES

The Verbal Arts Centre in Derry the art of verbal language in all its forms, including storytelling. The information relating to their archive is currently being updated.

The Verbal Arts Centre
Stable Lane and Mall Wall, Bishop Street Within, Derry, BT48 6PU
Tel: 028 7126 6946
www.verbalartscentre.co.uk/STORYTELLING/STORY_archives.htm

ULSTER FOLK AND TRANSPORT MUSEUM

The museum possesses an excellent library and archive covering all aspects of folk life in Ulster. The library has an extensive collection of superstitions, folklore and stories collected in Ulster. This includes audio recordings, many of which have been transcribed and classified, according to the Aarne-Thompson index, by Linda M. Ballard. Members of the public are welcome to use the library on a reference only basis during office hours.

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
Cultra, Holywood, Co.Down, N.Ireland, BT18 0EU
Tel: 028 9042 8428
www.nmni.com/uftm/Collections/Archives

ULSTER - AMERICAN FOLK PARK LIBRARY

The library of the Ulster - American Folk Park is primarily a centre for migration studies, concentrating on emigration from Ireland to America in the 18th and 19th centuries. The collection includes a selection of published works on folklore and folklife and volumes of stories covering both sides of the Atlantic.

This is a reference library open to the public for research. It is advisable to telephone in advance. The library is open 9.30 am - 4.30 pm Monday to Friday excluding Public Holidays.

Ulster - American Folk Park Library
2 Mellon Rd. Castletown, Omagh, Co.Tyrone, BT78 5QY
Tel: 028 8224 3292
www.nmni.com/uafp/Collections/Emigration

CHARLES PARKER ARCHIVE

Charles Parker (1919 - 80) was a BBC Radio producer who was a pioneer of the Oral History movement. He is probably best known as the producer of The Radio Ballads, a series of radio programmes created by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger which describe the lives and experience of working people in their own words and music.

Charles Parker built up a collection of tape recordings, transcripts, production books, notebooks, newspaper cuttings, letters and books. On his death this collection was deposited with the Birmingham Reference Library. The collection is currently being catalogued and contains much of interest to students of oral history, folk culture and storytelling.

Charles Parker Archive
Central Reference Library, Chamberlin Square, Birmingham, B3 3HQ
Tel: 0121 303 4217
www.birmingham.gov.uk/charlesparkerarchive

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

The Centre for English Cultural Traditions and Language was a research institution which acted as a national repository for materials on all aspects of language and cultural traditions throughout the British Isles.

The Institute for Folklore studies in Great Britain and Canada was a joint venture with the Department of Folklore, Memorial University of Newfoundland. The Centre's archives included a reference library and an audio-visual section including photographs, slides, audio-tapes, films and video-tapes. Folk narratives, anecdotes and jokes are well represented.

These and other collections are still available via the University Library. Requests for access to materials in the archives should be made in advance.

Western Bank Library & Information Centre
The University of Sheffield, Western Bank, Sheffield, S10 2TN
Tel: 0114 222 7299 www.shef.ac.uk/library/special/

THE DOC ROWE COLLECTION

Since the sixties Doc Rowe has been recording and filming cultural tradition and vernacular arts, folklore, song and dance of Britain and Ireland. His collection currently represents the most extensive collection of audio and video material to celebrate the variety and richness of traditional folk culture of these islands. It concentrates on the continuing development of a living culture, rather than solely on interpretation or exploration of the past.

Currently housed in Sheffield, the collection contains: audio and video recordings (with related documentation and transcripts); photographs and transparencies (both archival and contemporary); written and printed material (photocopies or published volumes); field notes; correspondence; artefacts and posters; newspaper cutting
www.docrowe.org.uk/collect/index.html

THE WATERWAYS ARCHIVE

The National Waterways Museum Archives held at Ellesmere Port, contain an extensive collection of Oral History recordings and transcripts relating to life on Britain's canals. Access to the collection is free but must be by prior booking with at least 24 hours notice.

Ellesmere Port Museum

Dockyard Rd. Ellesmere Port, South Wirral, L65 4EF

Tel:0151 373 4378

<http://nwm.org.uk/TheWaterwaysArchivesEllesmerePort.html>

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