Archives collections

This is a preliminary guide to the main archives that hold information about Hooker, his contemporaries, correspondents and collectors, or about the history of botany in general. If you know of additional resources that should be mentioned here, please email the project officer.

Alexander Turnbull Library [NZ] Material on several of Hooker’s New Zealand collectors. The Manuscripts and Archives section holds New Zealand’s largest and most important collection of non-government manuscripts and archives. It contains the papers of Maori, Pakeha and Pacific Island people active in all areas of New Zealand and Pacific life, including discovery and exploration, land transactions, the arts, politics, war, protest movements, religion, science, industrial relations, business and community work and environmental issues.

American Philosophical Society [USA] Holds numerous letters by Hooker, his father and other botanists. The APA Library is a major national centre for research in the history of science and technology, as well as general U.S. history to 1840. It houses over 200,000 volumes and bound periodicals, seven million manuscripts, and thousands of maps and prints. Outstanding manuscript collections range from 18th and 19th century natural history and linguistics to the modern life sciences, physics, and computer development. Papers from Rockefeller Institute scientists document the organisation of early 20th century medical research. Genetics and quantum physics collections include taped oral histories by founders of the fields.

Archives Hub [GB] A major national gateway to archive collections held in UK universities and colleges, forming part of the National Archives Network.

ASAP Web [AUS] Includes Bright Sparcs, an online guide to Australian archives that includes material on many of Hooker’s collectors. A register of over 3,000 people involved in the development of science, technology and medicine in Australia, including references to their archival materials and bibliographic resources.

Auckland Central City Library [NZ] Material on several of Hooker’s New Zealand collectors.

Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution [GB] Letters from Leonard Jenyns to J.D. Hooker. The Leonard Jenyns Correspondence can be found in the archives of the BRLSI. It consists of nearly 700 letters from more than 200 correspondents and stretches from 1817 until the 1870s. Among Jenyns’s correspondents were some of the most famous names from the world of natural history, many also being his personal friends, such as Charles Darwin and Sir Joseph Hooker. The letters have been transcribed and can be consulted at the BRLSI.

British Library, Correspondence with Alfred Russel Wallace [GB] Hooker’s correspondence with Alfred Russel Wallace is held at the British Library and is available online through the Wallace Correspondence Project.
Letters from Hooker to Sir Mountstuart Grant Duff. The India Office Records are the documentary archives of the administration in London of the pre-1947 government of India. They comprise the archives of the East India Company (1600–1858), the Board of Control or Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India (1784–1858), the India Office (1858–1947), the Burma Office (1937–1948), and a number of related British agencies overseas.

All the surviving letters between Hooker and Darwin, many of which have been published. The Project exists to publish the definitive edition of letters to and from Charles Darwin, the most influential naturalist of the 19th century: when complete the series will comprise approximately 30 volumes.


Over 200 letters between Hooker and the American botanist Asa Gray. Kew holds a microfilm of these. The archival collections of the Botany Libraries hold many rich sources of information. The botany archives specialises in unique historical materials that document the activities of botanists and their colleagues, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries. Materials include personal and institutional inventories, field notes, diaries, expeditions, plant lists, photographs, historic letters, and artefacts.

Material on several of Hooker’s New Zealand collectors. The Hocken Library is one of the foremost historical research libraries in New Zealand. It was established in 1910 when Dr Thomas Morland Hocken gave his private collection to the University of Otago, in trust for the people of New Zealand. The Library collects widely in relation to the history and culture of New Zealand, the Pacific and Antarctica, and has a special emphasis on the regions of Otago and Southland. The research collections include: archives, manuscripts, books, pamphlets, newspapers, maps, periodicals, paintings, drawings, photographs, music, and film.

See Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (below)

The Local Studies Collection contains material on William Archer, one of Hooker’s Tasmanian collectors.

Material about William Archer, one of Hooker’s main Tasmanian collectors, as well as major resources for the history of botany generally. The Society preserves the uniquely important collection of manuscripts of Carl Linnaeus which are so closely related to his specimen collections. Other archives include those of the Linnean Club, the Zoological Club, the Society for Promoting Natural History, the Botanical Society of London Minutes from 1844-1851 and H.M. Treasury Committee on Botanical Work of 1900-1901.

**London University: Imperial College Library** [GB] Letters (over 400) from Hooker to Thomas Henry Huxley. The Archives consist primarily of records of the Imperial College and its constituent Colleges since 1844. These records include registers, papers, photographs, drawings and plans. There are also collections of manuscripts and other material associated with former members of staff or students, among them, for example, the largest collection of Huxley papers in the world.

**London University: University College London** [GB] Letters from Hooker to Francis Galton. The Manuscripts and Rare Books Room is the Reading Room for the Library’s archive and manuscript collections, rare books, special category reference only, semi-closed access material and some open-access materials. Only users working on the afore-named categories of material are admitted to the reading room.

**Mitchell Library** [AUS] Material on several of Hooker’s Australasian collectors. The Mitchell Library and the Dixson Library form the Australian Research Collections of the State Library of New South Wales. These collections contain materials in a variety of formats relating to Australia and the southwest Pacific, with special emphasis on the state of New South Wales.

**Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa** [NZ] Material on William Colenso, Hooker’s most important New Zealand collector. Te Papa’s archives fall into two categories. The first consists of records generated by both the Museum and National Art Gallery from the time they were established in 1865 and 1930 respectively. The second category is made up of archives acquired by both these organisations since they began. A major part of this archive is the Art Manuscript collection, which includes records donated or acquired from dealer art galleries, individual New Zealand artists, and associations involved with art. Archives relating to other Museum collections have also been collected. Te Papa has an archives reading room facility for public use.

**National Library of Australia** [AUS] Material on several of Hooker’s Australasian collectors. The Register of Australian Archives and Manuscripts (RAAM) is a guide to collections of personal papers and non-governmental organisational records held by Australian libraries and archives.

**National Portrait Gallery** [GB] Has several portraits of Hooker.

**Natural History Museum** [GB] Has extensive archives on botany and the history of natural history more generally including material about Hooker specifically.
Nelson Provincial Museum [NZ] Material on David Monro, a Hooker collector. The Nelson Provincial Museum houses one of the largest historic photographic collections in the country. It also has an important Maori artefact collection and a comprehensive reference library of local history. The museum has an extensive permanent display and presents regular special exhibitions on selected subjects.

New Plymouth Public Library [NZ] Material on William Colenso, Hooker’s most important New Zealand collector.

Religious Society of Friends [GB] Material on James Backhouse, whose Australian collections were used by Hooker. The Library is the repository for one of the largest collections of materials in the world relating to Quakers and their activities. As well as looking after the central archives of Britain Yearly Meeting (which is the name for the organisation of Quakers in Britain), it also holds printed material, manuscripts and pictures. It started in 1673 when the Second Day Morning Meeting agreed to acquire two copies of everything written by Quakers and one copy of everything written against them. It still tries to do this, but it is no longer possible to be comprehensive, especially for American publications.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew [GB] Home of most of the Hooker archives, plus many other botanical ones. The Archives has over seven million sheets, in 4,600 collections; these are mostly Public Records, and the Library is the approved place of deposit for them under Public Records legislation: they contain unpublished information on the exploration, discovery and investigation of the world’s plants and fungi, particularly in the 19th and 20th centuries. A list of Kew’s J.D. Hooker papers is available to download.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne [AUS] Letters between Hooker and Ferdinand von Mueller, the Gardens’ Director. The Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, contains the most comprehensive botanical library in Australia. The purpose of the Library is to make available to staff the technical information they need to do their work. Most of the information comes in the form of books and periodicals in many different languages. However, there are also collections of maps, artwork, letters, manuscripts, and photographs which are an invaluable source of information. Much of the material is fragile and needs to be kept in special storage areas. The Library was started by Baron Ferdinand von Mueller. When he was appointed as the first Government Botanist there were very few botanical books in Victoria to which he could refer. Throughout his career he collected many of the texts needed for his work of discovering and naming Australian plants.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney [AUS] Material on Augustus Oldfield, one of Hooker’s Australian collectors. The library provides a full range of services to support the information needs of all staff of the Royal Botanic Gardens. Established in 1852, the Royal Botanic Gardens Library is one of the premier botanical and horticultural libraries in Australia. The library holds about 55,000 volumes of monographs and serials in the fields of plant systematics, plant ecology
and horticulture. Small collections of books are located at Mount Annan and Mount Tomah Botanic Gardens.

**Royal College of Surgeons** [GB] Several letters from Hooker in the library and archives, including one from James Hector, Director of the New Zealand Colonial Museum, two from William Henry Flower regarding elephant tusk and one from George Thwaites on the same subject.

**Royal Geographical Society** [GB] Material on James Mangles, whose Australian collections and contacts were used by Hooker. (N.B. Microfilm duplicate of material in Western Australian Archives). The Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers) holds maps, books, photographs, artwork, databases and documents which together form one of the most important geographical collections in the world. The holdings reflect the development of the study of geography across the world from the medieval period to the present day. They provide great insight into the activities and publications of geographers, travellers and environmental scientists from many parts of the world, and they are a tremendous educational resource. The value of this internationally significant resource is being continuously enhanced as new information is acquired.

**Royal Horticultural Society** [GB] Material on Ronald Gunn, Hooker’s most important Tasmanian collector as well as more general botanical history.

**Scott Polar Research Institute** [GB] Microfilm copies of material on Ronald Gunn, Hooker’s most important Tasmanian collector. This duplicates material that is also to be found in the Alexander Turnbull Library, NZ.

**University of Tasmania** [AUS] Material on William Archer, one of Hooker’s Tasmanian collectors. The Special/Rare Collection is the official keeping place of the University’s older administrative records. It also acts as the centre for historic archives of some other institutions, and some family, business and church records, and manuscripts. Its primary responsibility is the custody and servicing of various deposited records from Tasmanian bodies/organisations. The Archives service is now limited to maintenance of and access provision to existing collections. The Archives no longer accepts new material from outside organisations or individuals unless they supplement existing holdings.

**Washington State University Libraries** [USA] Hooker’s name appears within the Beattie Papers. The papers of R. Kent Beattie (1875-1960) were donated to the Washington State University Herbarium during the period from 1956 through 1960 by Mr. Beattie.

**West Australian Archives** [AUS] Material on James Mangles, whose Australian collections and contacts were used by Hooker.
**Whanganui museum** [NZ] Material on Richard Taylor, one of Hooker’s New Zealand collectors. An extensive collection of natural and human history with a regional emphasis that includes objects of both national and international significance.

**Zoological Society of London** [GB] 40 letters to and from Joseph Hooker dated 1849-1850 during his plant collecting trip to Bhutan, Sikkim and southern Tibet, written to Brian H. Hodgson, British Representative in Nepal and a noted collector of plant and animal specimens.