

1602
Sir Robert Cotton proposes the founding of a library and an academy for the study of his historic collection of manuscripts and books, among them the Magna Carta, Beowulf and the Lindisfarne Gospels. At his death, he leaves his collection to the nation.

1801
The first 'Librarian of the Oriental Repository' appointed by the 150-year old East India Company to manage the wealth of material relating to South East Asian trade, politics and culture it had amassed. The collection is now one of the foremost sources of information about the British Empire.



6,781
1842
6,781 books enter the Library on publication as the first Copyright Act is passed. The Act makes it a legal requirement to deposit a copy of every book published in the British Isles.

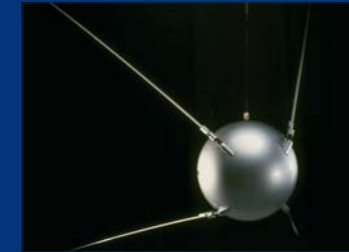


1857
The Round Reading Room opens, fulfilling Sir Anthony Panizzi's vision of opening up knowledge to 'poor students' and all those 'not having access to the great private collections'.

12,019

1950
12,019 books are published, listed weekly in the new British National Bibliography. This standardised listing of all new UK books reflected the growing importance of the trade, and the need for bookshops and libraries to keep abreast of new titles.

1960
As the 'white heat of technology' hots up following the launch of Sputnik and the start of the space race, the National Reference Library for Science and Invention is launched at the instigation of Solly Zuckerman, a visionary scientist who 'carried the significance of science into the heart of policy making'.



1989
The UK is the first country to issue the complete National Bibliography on the new CD-Rom technology. The project wins the information industry's top award.

www.bl.uk

1995
www.bl.uk opens – one of the UK's first websites. Magna Carta goes online, an inspiring symbol of the opening up of the national collection, and makes front page news as the juxtaposition of ancient and modern captures the public imagination.

1998
The Library's headquarters at St Pancras is opened by HM The Queen. It's immediately recognised by commentators as an 'outstanding achievement' and is quickly popular with users for its beautiful spaces and effective services.

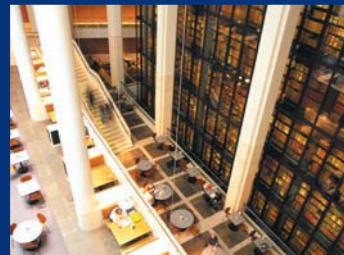


THE BRITISH LIBRARY WAS BORN OF A VISIONARY DRIVE TO COLLECT WORLD KNOWLEDGE AND A BELIEF THAT THE USE OF KNOWLEDGE BENEFITS SOCIETY

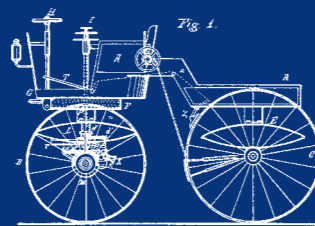


1753
The British Museum is founded, and funded by a national lottery. The core of its collection is the national library, an Enlightenment project that would collect the world's knowledge 'for public use to all posterity', with free access granted to 'all studious and curious persons'.

1823
The library of George III, a record of Enlightenment ideas about science, agriculture, exploration and industry, is given to the nation by his son, George IV. The King's Library, the centrepiece of our St Pancras building, remains in daily use.



1855
Bennet Woodcroft, a former professor of machinery, founds the Patent Office Library, to organise and make available the blueprints of Britain's inventive genius.



1906
Construction of specialist storage for newspapers begins in Colindale, north London. The first Newspaper Reading Room opens a few years later, in response to a growing public interest in the way that local, national and international events were viewed as they happened.



1955
The British Institute of Recorded Sound opens its doors. On discovering that deleted recordings were no longer available anywhere in the country, Patrick Saul lobbied great musicians and major politicians to found a national sound archive.

14,706

1962
14,706 international research journal titles are available for loan as the document supply service for science and technology opens for business. The service means that the newest information is easily available to support research in the new universities and corporate laboratories being established across the UK.



1972
Lord (Fred) Dainton and David, 1st Viscount Eccles, are the driving forces behind the British Library Act. This brings the great national humanities and science collections together and unites them with the service-focused document supply and national bibliographic enterprises.



1977
The Library uses new communications technology to launch a pioneering online bibliographic service for the international information industry. One of its functions is to enable the UK library network to automate their catalogues.

2003
The Legal Deposit Libraries Act secures the copyright deposit of electronic publications and databases, the historic culmination of ten years work by the Library and our partners.



2005-2008

The Library's new strategy is published, which includes our commitments to creating a National Digital Library to preserve the record of our age, integrating our services, and opening up the nation's memory to the widest possible audience.