

Opening Hours

Monday - Friday: 9.30 - 17.30 *There is no charge to enter the Linen Hall Library.* (We are closed most public holidays. If in doubt, please check our website or telephone the Library.)

Toilets and Lift Access

Toilets are available to members and café users who provide proof of purchase. The nearest public toilets are across the street in Belfast City Hall. Wheelchair access is available throughout the building, and all floors are accessible by customer lift. To avail of lift access, please enter through the Fountain Street door.

Tours

A Library tour is the best way to be introduced to the invaluable resources held in the Linen Hall and the beautiful listed Victorian building in which it is housed. There is a short 45- minute introductory tour available. Group tours can also be arranged. Advanced booking is required. *For more details about our range of tours and charges please ask a member of staff, pick up a tour leaflet, or visit our website.*

Visitors

All visitors are welcome to access our collections, and staff are always on hand to help. *Visitors engaged in serious research projects are recommended to make prior contact with the Library to ensure the best possible service.* Some charges may apply. Contact Library staff for more information at info@linenhall.com.

Our main funder:



We are one of Belfast's oldest charities and depend on donations as one of our main sources of income. Please help us continue our great work.

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Registered Charity: NIC 104564



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FLOOR PLAN

5	STAFF ONLY	
4	IRISH & REFERENCE NI POLITICAL COLLECTION GOVERNORS' ROOM	
3	PERFORMANCE AREA MALE TOILETS	
2	GENERAL LENDING COFFEE SHOP ACCESSIBLE TOILET	 
1	ADMINISTRATION FEMALE TOILETS	
G	FOUNTAIN ST. ENTRANCE ACCESSIBLE ENTRANCE	



VISITORS' GUIDE

FREE
ADMISSION



“ A little oasis of calm. ”

“ It is a resource for the scholar and the amateur. ”

“ I cannot emphasize this enough: go to the Linen Hall Library while in Belfast. ”



www.linenhall.com



Dear Visitor

Welcome to the Linen Hall Library. We are one of Belfast's most popular tourist destinations and a cultural powerhouse. This guide is a very brief introduction to our Library and its wealth of archives and services. All visitors are welcome to browse our collections, and staff are always on hand to help. Admission to the Library is free, but as we are a charity donations from visitors are needed to support the Library's work. You can also help by visiting our gift shop, charity bookshop (located near the Library) and café, or by becoming a member.

Member benefits include:

- Free familiarisation tour
- Borrow 8 books at a time for up to four weeks
- Receive at least 10% off all Linen Hall items in our gift range, café and on selected event tickets
- Advance notification of events
- Exclusive access to daily newspapers

For full details, please contact our reception desk, pick up a membership leaflet or join online at: www.linenhall.com.

We hope you enjoy your time at the Linen Hall Library.

Julie Andrews, Director

History

The Linen Hall Library was founded on 13 May 1788 "by a group of 'worthy' plebians who would do honour to any town." At a time when books were hard to procure and prohibitively expensive, independent libraries came into being as a way for resources to be shared.

Originally Library members met in pubs and private houses, eventually taking rooms in the White Linen Hall, located where Belfast City Hall now stands. In the late 1800s the Library purchased its current site at 17 Donegall Square North, a former linen warehouse offering the reinforced floors necessary for the weight of the books.

The story of the Linen Hall is also the story of Belfast. The two flourished with the advent of industrialisation, the move of the rural population into the town seeking work, and the burgeoning business classes seeking education and advancement.

The Library is home to world-renowned collections including the Irish and Local Studies archive and the Northern Ireland Political Collection, the definitive Troubles archive that includes over 350,000 items to date.

As well as being a library and archive, the Linen Hall is an accredited museum with three pillars of the collection holding museum status: *Belfast Printed and Provincial Printed Books*, *Gibson Collection of Burns and Burnsiana*, and *Northern Ireland Political Collection*.

As former President of Ireland Mary McAleese commented on a visit: **"There's something very special about the Linen Hall Library. During my years at university I used to come here often. It is such a refuge; such a shelter from the storms on the streets in times gone by. An intellectual space respectable of all views."**

We hope your visit is equally special.

Our Main Collections

General Lending (Level 2): The Library has an extensive General Lending collection, with strengths in fiction and non-fiction, ranging from 19th century classics to contemporary literary fiction, and a comprehensive children's and young adult collection. Daily newspapers (for members only), magazines and audiobooks are also accessible.

Genealogy & Heraldry (Level 4): The Library holds important primary and secondary sources to support the citizen researcher in genealogy and family history, and boasts a remarkable collection of books on heraldry.

Irish & Local Studies (Level 4): This collection contains a wealth of material including books, periodicals, manuscripts and maps on all aspects of Irish history and culture. Street directories and a range of local newspapers on microfilm are also available.

Languages Collections (Level 4): The Library has significant collections of both historic and contemporary material written in the Irish language and Ulster-Scots.

Literary Archives (by request): Original manuscripts and letters of a number of local writers, including Louis MacNeice, John Hewitt, Joan Lingard and Sam Hanna Bell. A selection have been digitised and are accessible at www.nilitraryarchive.com.

Northern Ireland Political Collection (by request): A truly unique resource containing over 350,000 items relating to the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. The collection contains books, journals, press cuttings, posters, audio-visual material, and ephemera. Digitised material from the collection relating to the 1990s is also accessible at www.dividedsociety.org.

Theatre & Performing Arts Archive (by request): The first port of call for anyone with an interest in or researching local theatre. The archive contains original programmes, handbills, posters, scripts and photographs. Digitised content is available at www.digitaltheatrearchive.com.

Feel free to browse amongst the extensive material we have on open access. Not all of our specialised collections are on display in the Library and some of our material is non-borrowable as it may be fragile or original.

You can also use the Library's online catalogue to find what you are looking for. The catalogue is accessible through our website at www.linenhall.com.

For more information about our collections, please ask a member of staff or visit our website www.linenhall.com.



Children

We actively welcome children. For our young readers we provide a reading space beside the main issue desk on Level 2 complete with picture books, easy readers and jigsaws. The Library does not operate a 'silence policy' in this area. Nappy changing facilities are available on Level 2.

Computer Access

Internet accessible computers are available to members only. Visitors can connect to the Linen Hall Wi-Fi network on their personal devices. The LHL Wi-Fi password is available on request at any reception desk.

Eating and Drinking

The licensed café is situated on Level 2. There is a selection of locally produced snacks, lunches and hot and cold drinks with 10% discount for members. Eating and drinking are only permitted in this area. The café is open from 10:00am - 4:00pm.

Events

The Library has a wide-ranging cultural programme including exhibitions, theatre, music, readings, lectures, films and workshops. For further information please pick up a What's On guide or visit our website at www.linenhall.com.

Events can be booked online at www.linenhall.com or in person at the main reception on level 2. To comply with current GDPR regulations, the Linen Hall regrets that it cannot take bookings over the phone. Events can be booked up to an hour prior to start time.

Gifts

The gift area at the Linen Hall has an enticing selection of items carefully chosen to delight any book lover, from mugs to literary maps, tote bags to reading journals, book-themed leather goods to jewellery, badges to pencil cases, coasters to jigsaws... Perfect mementos of your visit, or to give as a gift.