

British Museum curatorial departments

Curatorial departments are arranged geographically, there are eight curatorial departments in total:

Prints and Drawings

The Department of Prints and Drawings contains the national collection of Western prints and drawings, in the same way as the National Gallery and Tate hold the national collection of paintings. It is one of the top three collections of its kind in the world. There are approximately 50,000 drawings and over two million prints dating from the beginning of the fifteenth century up to the present day, almost all of which are available to the public in the Prints & Drawings Room on request.

Middle East

The Department of the Middle East covers the ancient and contemporary civilisations and cultures of the Middle East from the Neolithic period until the present. There are over 258,000 items in the Middle Eastern department, all available on Collections Online (almost 60,000 of which already have images attached). These are mostly available to the public on request either through the Arched Room or (in the case of the ethnographic collections) via a study room at Blythe House.

Coins and Medals

The Department of Coins and Medals is home to one of the world's finest numismatic collections, comprising about one million objects. The collection spans the history of coinage from its origins in the seventh century BC to the present day, and related material such as coin weights, tokens and money boxes. There are over 1 million items in the Department for Coins and Medals, all of which are available to the public either on display or in the study room on request for research purposes.

Prehistory and Europe

The Department of Prehistory and Europe is responsible for collections that cover a vast expanse of time from the earliest human tools in Africa and Asia two million years ago to the art and archaeology of Europe from the earliest times to the present day, including the history of Britain under Roman occupation.

Greece and Rome

The Department of Greece and Rome at the British Museum has one of the most comprehensive collections of antiquities from the Classical world, with over 100,000 objects. These mostly range in date from the beginning of the Greek Bronze Age (about 3200BC) to the reign of the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century AD, with some pagan survivals.

Ancient Egypt and the Sudan

The Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan at the British Museum houses an important collection of objects which illustrate every aspect of the cultures of the Nile Valley, from the Neolithic period (about 10,000 BC) until the twelfth century AD.

Asia

The Department of Asia covers the material and visual cultures of Asia – a vast geographical area embracing Japan, Korea, China, Central Asia, Afghanistan, South Asia and South-East Asia. The collection spans the Neolithic, from about 4000 BCE, to the present day.

Africa, Oceania and the Americas

The collection of the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas includes around 350,000 objects, representing the cultures of the indigenous peoples of four continents.