<u>Gladstone's Writing – FAQ</u>

Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, from 2018-2023.

'Gladstone's Writing' is the first major project completed under the *Digital Gladstone* umbrella, a collective term for all activities dedicated to using online and digital technologies to bring collections and events here at Gladstone's Library to a global audience.

William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) was a prolific correspondent, researcher, and writer throughout his life. An important part of Gladstone's Library's mission statement is to promote an understanding of the complexity of the life and times of William Ewart Gladstone, his impact on the world and his continual relevance today and for the future.

The items chosen for inclusion in 'Gladstone's Writing' come from the library's Foundation Collection and the Glynne-Gladstone Archive, and reflect the heart of our collections and the creation of the Library. They include just under 9000 letters written by and to Gladstone, reflecting him as a family man, friend, author, and scholar, as well as the public's reception of him. They are joined by just under 200 books extensively annotated by him in the course of a reading life that totalled many thousands of books.

This globally-significant collection is now available to browse, search, and read online in a new digital catalogue that combines high-quality images of every page with helpful information. Accessible to all from anywhere in the world, the catalogue allows Gladstone's Library to fulfil its mission as not only the memorial to William Ewart Gladstone, but as a centre for international research into his life and legacy.

We have written this guide to help you get the best from the catalogue; anticipating your questions and giving some useful information. The sections include some key terms that you will encounter, tips and tricks for more effective searching, and an introduction to the collections that we have digitised. If there is anything this guide does not answer, please email library@gladlib.org.

Key terms

All of 'Gladstone's Writing' has been checked, referenced, digitised, and catalogued according to international standards. This means that it works together with collections all over the world, and that it will work with future projects here at Gladstone's Library.

However, it also means that you may find terms that are unfamiliar, and that although archives and printed item collections increasingly look like internet search engines, they work on different principles.

We've brought together some definitions that will help you get to know how it works.

Archive:	Unlike most printed **books**, archival items are usually unpublished and (almost always) unique. Most of the records in 'Gladstone's Writing' are letters, but you can also find memos, notes, certificates, printed flyers, and more.
Book:	Printed items. Unlike **archives**, it is less usual to find a truly unique book, but the books in the Gladstone Foundation Collection are unique due to the annotations made by Gladstone and the uncut pages that reveal sections he didn't read.
Classmark:	If you're a library user this will be most familiar to you as the label found on the spine of every library book. Many libraries use the Dewey Decimal System, but here at Gladstone's Library we use a variation on William Gladstone's own cataloguing system, an alpha-numeric system used by many 18th and 19th century libraries. Archives don't use classmarks – they use **reference numbers**.

Subject headings:	Broad headings which tell you what the book or archival item is about, even if the item itself doesn't specifically mention the word. These are taken from a controlled vocabulary provided by the Library of Congress. Controlled vocabularies enable you to search library and archive catalogues across the world.
Metadata:	Simply, 'data about data'. The data in a book or a letter – the words on the page, whether printed or handwritten, that have been digitised – cannot be searched. What you are searching when you use a search term or keyword is the metadata; the information that has been collated about the item digitised.
Record:	Each individual item in an archive is called a record.
Reference number:	Archives reference numbers work in the same way as a book's **classmark**, in that it allows us to find and locate records. But reference numbers also link each individual archive record to all the other records in the archive by showing where it sits within the hierarchy of the archive: this is one of the reasons they are often so long.
Search term:	These are the words and phrases that can be used to bring up results in the catalogue. You may be used to searching for information via the internet, where a search term can be literally any word you can think of. Library and archive catalogues don't work in quite the same way. If you search for 'woodcutter' or 'tree' for example (maybe you're interested in Gladstone as an early environmentalist!) it's unlikely that results will appear. This is because we have only transcribed the first line of each letter as well as certain **subject headings**. At present, the most effective search terms to use for the archives are people's names, dates, addresses, and geographical locations. The best search terms for books are titles, authors, and broad subject headings. You can also use dates for both books and archives.

What can I expect to see in the 'Gladstone's Writing' collection?

You can expect to see a life in writing: not only letters and annotated books but all the other thousands of pieces of paper that flowed across the kitchen tables, desks, post boxes and bags of the nation to end up in the Temple of Peace in Hawarden Castle. People sent Gladstone Christmas cards, postcards, books, telegrams, even pieces of fabric and bits of wood. They wrote to wish him happy birthday, to give him advice on his political career, to share family news, and to send him gifts. His bibliophile status being widely known, many of the gifts he received were books, some of which later became part of the Foundation Collection at Gladstone's Library. The books were often accompanied by a letter from the author, allowing us to trace their provenance to the original sender and reuniting them today in our digital collection.

However, what the collection undoubtedly shows is that Gladstone was a politician, and like all politicians he had both his supporters and his enemies. Many of the letters from the general public range from spirited comments to much more serious in tone, such as death threats (see our warnings section below).

How can I get started?

The first option is to navigate to here: [Home - Portal App (preservica.com)](#)

You can also access digitised printed books from our online catalogues. Gladstone's books are catalogued in both MainCat and GladCat, and you will find a note in each book's record noting that is

has been digitised along with a clickable link to the portal. Full details of annotations in all of Gladstone's books (including digitised books) can be found on GladCat.

For archival items, the handlist for the Glynne-Gladstone Archive can be found here [Glynne-Gladstone Archive | Gladstone's Library (gladstoneslibrary.org)](#). Reference numbers for each item can then be searched in the digital catalogue.

How can I search it?

Use the search box at the top.

If you'd like to see all the books in order, enter 'WEG' into the search box and press enter.

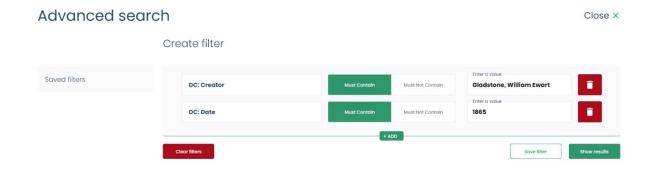For the letters, 'GLA' will bring up the folders in order.

Simple search

Enter a search term such as a name, date, location, or subject heading into the search bar to search all of the metadata in the digital catalogue. The search results will include any instances of your search term across the digital catalogue (both books and archives).

If you would like to search within a particular field (creator, date, location), select from the dropdown menu at the left of the search bar. The search results will include any instances of your search term in the field you have specified, across the digital catalogue (both books and archives).

Advanced search

You can also select 'Advanced Search'. Here you can enter multiple search terms in different fields to further narrow down your search. For example, if you were interested in items created by William Ewart Gladstone in 1865, you could do a search like this:

What will I find in each record?

For archives, you will find:

- the reference number for the item
- the creator or author of the item
- the contributor (usually the recipient of the item if it is a letter)
- the date created
- the title for the item
- a transcription of the first sentence of the letter
- details about where the physical item is held
- what the copyright permissions are for the images

For the books, you will find:

- The classmark of the book
- The title of the book
- The author
- The editors or translators (if relevant)
- Relevant subject headings
- The collation of the book (number of pages, illustration details, size)
- The publisher
- The date the book was published
- The place the book was published
- The language the book is in
- The relevant copyright permissions for the images

The full description with details of annotations contained can be found in the library's printed collections catalogue, GladCAT.

How is the digital catalogue arranged?

For the **books**, you will find that each book's name starts with a classmark (e.g. WEG/A 10/SMI) before the title. This allows you to quickly see the title while still replicating the order that they are in on the physical shelves here at Gladstone's Library.

For the **letters**, you will see that they are arranged in the same order they appear in the handlist for the archive. We have retained the hierarchy of the archive too, so you can view the details of the files from the archive that have been digitised, as well as the individual items within each file.

Why isn't my search term working?

Any search term you input will only search the available metadata, meaning the typed content in the catalogue record. This means that you might need to play around with different search terms and synonyms to find relevant records.

The digitised letters are not yet fully catalogued, so their searchability is currently limited to names, dates, locations, and a transcription of the first line. These are the best places to start when entering search terms for the archives.

We have catalogued the books and archives following international standards, which might mean that you need to tweak your search terms slightly. For example, if you are searching specifically within the Creator or Subject fields, bear in mind that the names are given in the order surname, first name, for example Gladstone, William Ewart.

If you would like to offer a transcription of any letter, please contact the team at library@gladlib.org.

The first letter digitised dates from 1819 (and the first book is from 1803). Educational levels varied at this time (school attendance didn't become compulsory in the UK until 1870), meaning that spellings are often inconsistent. Where something has been misspelled, we have transcribed the word as it appears and added [sic] immediately afterwards.

Why are there [?] in the data?

19th century handwriting takes a bit of practice to follow, especially when you are looking at letters written by multiple correspondents from all walks of life. You may find that you cannot read all the words, and that has been the case for our cataloguers too.

If these [?] symbols are immediately preceded by a word (without a space separating them) they indicate that we think we have transcribed what that word is, or added who we think the creator or contributor of an item is, but we aren't 100% certain.

If these symbols have a space on either side, they indicate that there is a word or several words that we couldn't read to transcribe.

If you would like to offer a transcription of any words, please contact the team at library@gladlib.org

Warnings

This information is provided to enable you to make an informed choice when browsing.

These items were all created during the 19th century, and so are very much of their time. They contain language that we now consider outdated or offensive, including racist statements that we now identify as hate speech. Many of the negative letters hide behind the cloak of anonymity in much the same way as many keyboard warriors today.

Due to the nature of Gladstone's political career, some of the letters contain elements that are distressing. These include threats against his life, abusive language, and letters from people struggling with their mental health who are writing to him as a public figure. There are also letters from those in distressing circumstances such as extreme poverty.

Gladstone lived at the centre of a wide family network, and like any family, there was tragedy as well as happiness. The archive holds many letters of condolences including those relating to the death of children and death by suicide.

A central part of this project has been fidelity to the original, therefore we have not censored or removed offensive, outdated, or distressing content. Gladstone's Library is continually reviewing our cataloguing and metadata standards to better reflect and acknowledge problematic language while also making collection items as available to all as we can.