COOKIE FAQs

Cookie FAQs – Frequently asked questions about the British Library’s use of cookies

Recent changes to privacy legislation mean that all organisations are now required to provide additional information about cookies, how they are used, how you can amend your preferences or delete certain cookies used on our website.

Why do sites use Cookies?
Websites use cookies for a variety of reasons. The Library uses cookies to:

- give our users the opportunity to personalise information, for example, the BL Management Business Studies Portal
- information securely which you give to the Library, for example, the My workspace service for readers
- help with online sales, such as the BL online shop
- collect information about how our website is being used to help to improve the design and functionality of our website.

Do I have to accept cookies?
No, but when you access British Library websites you will automatically accept cookies, unless you change your computer settings. We provide information on what these cookies are and how you can delete them or change your devices’ cookie settings. If you decide to delete or not accept our cookies then certain features and services might not be available to you such as shopping baskets, preferences and logins.

Some of the cookies we use analyse how people use our website, known as ‘performance cookies’. We do this so that we can ensure our websites work efficiently and reflect the needs of our users. If you decline performance cookies, your site usage won’t be included in our analysis and we won’t be able to take your usage into account when improving our services.

Do BL cookies collect or hold my personal details?
No. The cookies we use don’t tell us who you are, but a small number may store encrypted versions of information where you have asked us to, for example to help keep you logged into a session or remember shopping basket details or search results.

Who can see my Cookies?
No one except a person authorised by the Library can see BL cookies.

When a Cookie is transferred to your browser, part of its content is the domain name of the server that placed it there. Another part of the Cookie data is the path to the program that placed the Cookie.
When you visit a site that checks for Cookies, the browser looks at the request to identify the name of the server and the path to the program. If a Cookie exists that has the same server domain name and the same path, then that program is allowed to access that Cookie because it placed it there in the first place.

If the domain name and path do not match exactly, the browser will not transmit the cookie. This means that the Cookie will only be made available to an authorised program on the host server.

Are cookies safe?
Yes. The cookies we use are completely safe and secure. They cannot obtain or read any information stored on your computer information or pass on viruses to your computer. Cookies are text files. You cannot get a virus from a text file -- for something to pass on a virus, you must first execute a program or applet.

If I accept BL cookies will I be sent spam or marketing material?
No. We will only contact you with promotional information if you have asked us to do so. See our Privacy Statement for more information about how the Library handles your personal information.

If I use a public computer are other users able to get my details from the cookies?
No. Our cookies cannot be used by anyone else with access to the same computer to find out anything about you, other than that someone using that computer visited a certain website.

You should always be very wary about inputting any personal information, passwords, etc on a public computer.

Where can I find out more about the Library’s use of cookies?
Our Cookie Policy explains what cookies are, how and why they are used by the British Library. You do not have to accept BL cookies. However, if you decline cookies then certain services will not be available to you. For example, shopping baskets, preferences and logins.

If you have any questions about the Library’s use of cookies, please contact us by email to cookielaw@bl.uk