

Library profile: The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Abstract: Fiona Fogden has spent much of her career in law firm libraries, but she has recently taken on the role of Knowledge & Information Service Manager at RICS – the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. So, who better to give LIM an overview of the RICS Knowledge & Information service, describe what the collections contain, and also tell us how the service would be of interest to legal information professionals.

Keywords: information management; special libraries; professional organisations; Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) traces its origins back to 1792, when a group then known as the Surveyors Club was formed. A group of surveyors came together at the Westminster Palace Hotel in London. They decided to create a professional association, complete with a charter, resolutions, and bylaws. By 1868, the group had expanded to include nearly 50 members and there was a desire amongst them to establish an official organisation with a formal structure. The group met again at the Westminster Palace Hotel and elected officers and a president. It established its offices that same year on Parliament Square, which still serve as the RICS headquarters today.

A lot of interior design work was done to the building in the 1890s to create what most people see today, including the beautiful listed library. The library is integral to elements of the Royal Charter which state: “The objects of the Institution shall be to secure the advancement and facilitate the acquisition of that knowledge which constitutes the profession of a surveyor.” The Metropolis Management and Building Acts (Amendment) Act of 1878 was the first Act of Parliament to contain a statutory recognition of the existence of the Institution of Surveyors.

Membership of RICS is now around 134,000 and whilst a large proportion of the members are in the UK, members are located all around the world.

I joined the RICS at the end of September 2022, having spent most of my career in law firm libraries. However, I did start my career, first role after my MA in Library and Information Studies, as an Assistant Librarian in 1994 at the RICS, so it feels like I have come full circle.

THE HISTORIC COLLECTION

Whilst the Surveyors’ Institution wasn’t convened until 1868 the collection of materials it holds dates back much further. This is due to two main factors. Firstly, various

other allied institutes merged into the RICS, such as the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers. Secondly, and most impactfully, there was a conscious policy to build up a historic collection through purchase and donations. This started in 1868 with the first President, Mr John Clutton, saying in his opening address: “The Council hope that members will bear in mind that it is important to have a good library, and that books and maps should be presented ...” Upwards of 170 members donated over £350 to the Library Fund and a large number of books to the Library, ranging in date from the 1590s to the then modern day.

The Council for the Preservation of Business Archives came into being in 1937, urging bodies to consider their responsibilities for keeping good archives. The Second World War delayed much development on this front but post-war the RICS again asked members to donate to a fund to purchase materials for the library. The library in its modern guise is funded out of the membership fees.

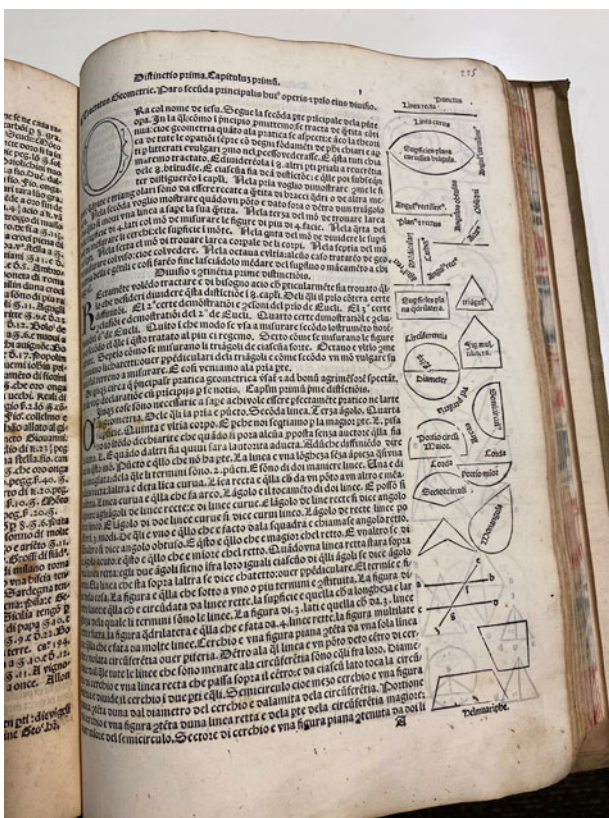
The collection reflects the main disciplines that make up the modern RICS: Valuation, Building Surveying, Land, Construction & Quantity Surveying, Real Estate, and Dispute Resolution. People have been writing books about surveying for many years and our collections include Victorian copies of the 11th Century Domesday Book, which is one of the earliest examples of a work on surveying that people are familiar with.

A large amount of the historical collection used to be held in off-site storage, but recently, during the pandemic, due to a change in the way the RICS HQ is used, the entire historic collection was moved on site, but not all physically located in what people know as the library. The collection is dotted about in secure areas of the building and there is a project to get this organised and made more available.

The collection includes an amazing range of maps, large folios, hand painted drawings of buildings, scrolls, vellum covered texts, auction catalogues, guidebooks and training materials. It is a plus side of the pandemic that



RICS HQ in Lego. While it would have been possible to include a picture of the RICS HQ, this model is always popular with students when they come to visit



Summa de arithmetica by Luca Pacioli

this important collection is no longer at arms-length in off-site storage.

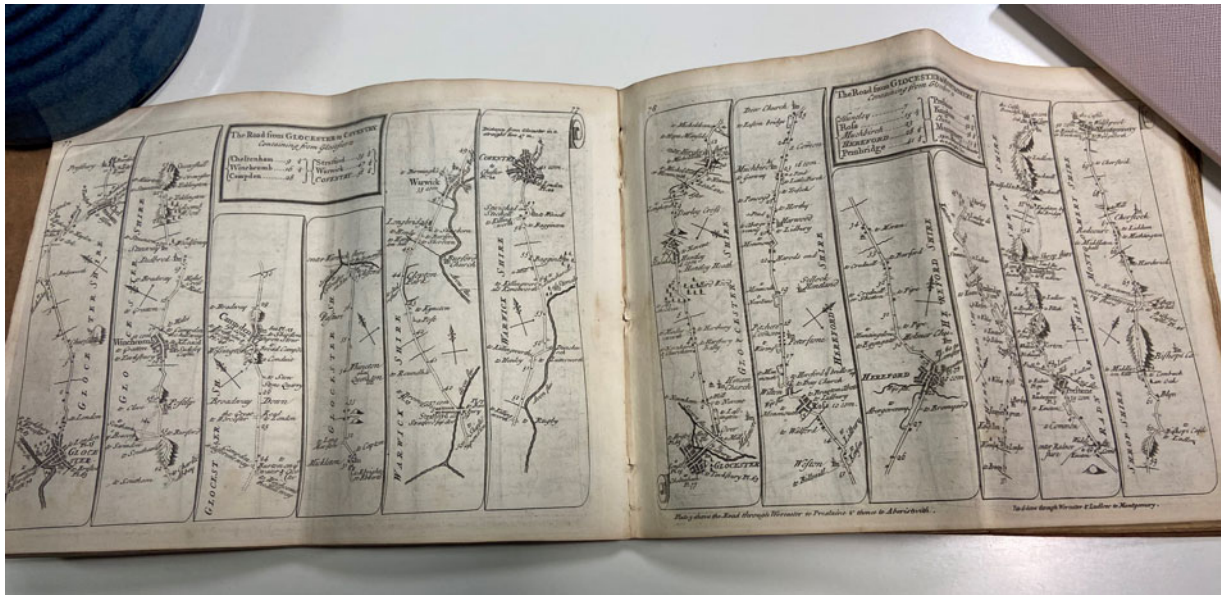
The earliest items are from the late 15th century and mostly to do with mathematics. These are early examples of printed books and the reason these are in the collection is because maths is needed for measuring and valuation.

One example is *Summa de arithmetica* (1494), by Luca Pacioli. The *Summa* is the first printed work on algebra in a vernacular language, in this case Italian. The book in the RICS collection is from the first publishing in 1494. It contains a comprehensive summary of Renaissance mathematics, including practical arithmetic, basic algebra, geometry and accounting, written in Italian for use as a textbook.

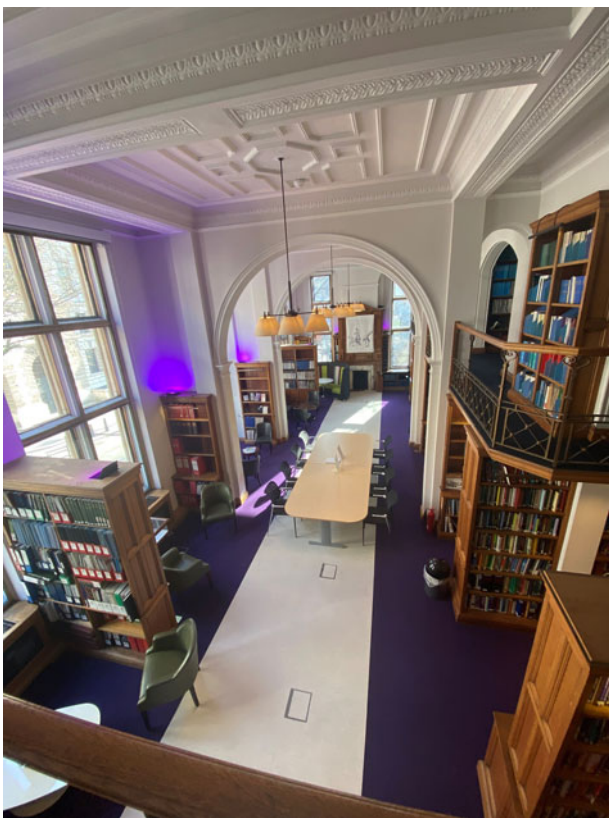
Land surveying is also a popular discipline and I love the phone sized (when folded up) *Ogilby's Survey, revised, improved, and reduced to a size portable for the pocket* from 1762. When students visit this is a firm favourite to view.

There are some rather more mundane historical items, too, including *The Builder* from 1843, and early editions of textbooks including a copy of *Woodfall's Landlord and Tenant* from 1843. From a more recent time we have the 1982 *Estates Gazette*, which is referred to regularly for valuations due to many Capital Gains Tax calculations requiring material from this date.

The catalogue of our collection can be browsed and searched publicly using <https://rics.koha-ptfs.co.uk/>



Ogilby's Survey, 1762, showing the route from Gloucester to Coventry



A view of the RICS Library from the gallery – note that you will only be able to see the on-brand purple carpet in LIM on Cambridge core, which is in colour

WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE TO LAW FIRMS?

If you have a Real Estate team the chances are you've heard of The Red Book (Valuation) or The Blue Book

(Estate Agency) or The Black Book (Construction / Quantity Surveying). The RICS library can help you get familiar with these, and also help with past editions.

You may have lawyers that work on tribunals like the Lands Tribunal, that often also has a Chartered Surveyor on the panel. The crossover here is a prime example of where the surveying and legal worlds meet and work well together. Before the passing of the Lands Tribunal Act 1949 most disputes of this kind were referred to one of the Official Arbitrators appointed under the Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act 1919. These arbitrators were surveyors of high professional standing, but they were not lawyers. The modern composition of the Tribunal, with knowledgeable surveyors and lawyers working alongside each other, qualifies it to deal with the diverse questions of mixed law and fact which can arise in disputes relating to the valuation of land.

You may work on cases that involve building materials or building safety, if so our collection might help you. I am aware, for example, that our journals have been used to look up when cladding concerns might have first been raised. Not all of this has been digitised, or if some of it was it has now disappeared.

The saying goes that 'good fences make good neighbours' and dispute resolution (including boundary disputes) is another facet of RICS work. The RICS Global President's Panel of Dispute Resolvers and Expert Witnesses comprises a full spectrum of dispute resolution practitioners, including mediators, arbitrators, adjudicators, dispute board members, independent experts and expert witnesses.

Also, if any of your lawyers are members of the RICS then remind them about the information benefits of their membership. They have access to ebooks and ejournals as part of their membership. There may be some

specialised texts that you will not need to buy just for that team from your own organisation's budget as all RICS members have access. Ebooks are a live service and the eJournals are due to come online during the spring and summer of 2023. More about the general and ebooks service can be found here <https://www.rics.org/profession-standards/knowledge-and-information-services>

THE KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION SERVICE

The first thing to deal with here is why I am not 'The Librarian'. There have been many amazing librarians who preceded me at the RICS. I worked in a team of 10 people under Pauline Lane-Gilbert in the 1990s and alongside Cathy Linacre, who then became the Librarian before the pandemic hit and the small team took different paths. Members of the RICS expressed their desire to maintain a service, but felt the word 'library' was anachronistic. It was also perceived the word library represented a space and not a service, so it didn't express how the service could look after our 130,000 plus members wherever they were in the world.

Whilst we are primarily a service for our members we understand that there are allied organisations that work with our members such as lawyers. We would prefer that the RICS member gets in touch if they have a question about interpretation of our guidance or standards, as we can then give them priority, so if you are working with them remind them they can contact standards@rics.org to get help with ethical and standards queries and knowledge@rics.org to get access to

resources and materials. I look after both those inboxes, so either way they will get in touch with me. If I am not able to answer queries directly I can tap into the relevant specialist in the area for their input.

Some of you may have used the RICS bookshop in past years, which was situated next to the library space. That has now become my lovely and delightful office as the bookshop is no more, and we do not sell either RICS materials (all current standards and guidance is free online) or third party items such as JCT contracts.

On the plus side, if you do happen to visit the physical space and log onto the guest wifi you will be able to access *Property Week* and *Building* magazine content that is usually behind a paywall.

THE FUTURE

A document delivery service alongside a CLA licence is in the pipeline and I will message the Lis-Law email group when that service is up and running. In the meantime, if you need copies of materials I can help, while I can also support visits to our physical library space at Parliament Square.

I will be looking at a date to have an 'open house' and will advertise this on Lis-Law in due course. If you would be interested in such a tour then please let me know via knowledge@rics.org and I will add you to a notification list.

The future will be determined primarily by what the RICS members want and how we can support them to succeed in their careers, but as professionals who work alongside our members we would also love to hear from you.

Biography

Fiona Fogden has spent much of her career in Law Firm libraries, most recently as the Senior Library & Information Services Manager for EMEA at Reed Smith. She left Reed Smith in September 2022 and is now Knowledge and Information Services Manager for the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. She has had other dips out the legal sector at various points including at an Accountancy firm for a few years and also at software vendor Vable. Fiona has written a book on *Negotiating Licences for Digital Resources* under her maiden name of Fiona Durrant. She has also contributed to both editions of the *BIALL Handbook of Legal Information Management* and she has delivered training courses and BIALL conference sessions. She says she is always keen to help fellow librarians to be their best selves.