

Using the Archives Catalogue

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How do I search the archive catalogue?

To search the entire catalogue, enter a word, or words, into the 'Any text' field. The word options 'And' will generally give you more results. Choosing 'Phrase' will only look for a specific phrase, in that order (see below for further advice on word and field options). Press the 'Search' button, and you will retrieve a list of relevant hits, showing the finding number, title, and covering dates. Hitting the 'View' option will show you the full record.

How do I narrow my search? I've got 1,254 hits!

You can use many of the advanced search options to narrow down your search. You can search on a particular level, you can choose to search using a range of dates, or you can add another word to your search. For example, 'Scotland' returns several hundred records, but 'Scotland' AND 'mineral*' returns three.

See below for other ways to search.

How do I widen my search? I only got 2 hits!

You could try entering a less specific search term, for example, 'Uganda AND collections' only returns one hit, whereas a search for 'Uganda' alone returns over 40 hits, including information on collecting expeditions, and correspondence about collections made in Uganda.

How do I search for people?

The easiest way to search for people is to use the 'Any text' field. Putting in a surname only will give you the greatest number of hits, and this is recommended in most cases. It may not always be practical when you have a common name – think of all the people called Smith. Try searching for a phrase such as 'John Smith', but note it will not pick up records where initials have been used.

If you want to do a more targeted search for people, you can use the *name authority* – an index to standard forms of names used in the catalogue. You can search the name authority using the 'Search People' button. Changing the word option to 'And' will give more results than 'Phrase', for example if you are searching for the name 'John Smith'.

How do I search for places and subjects?

At present, our online catalogue does not use place and subject indexes. Please search for place names (countries, cities, towns, geographical features etc) using the 'Any text' search field.

We hope to develop the option to search or browse place names and subjects in due course.

What if I have a specific date or time period in mind?

You can use the date field rather than the 'Anytext' field to search for dates. You can enter an individual year, a span of years, and you can even enter terms such as 'early', 'mid', and 'late'. Some dates are entered using the prefix 'c' (circa), and some dates are entered as 'undated' or 'n.d.' (no date).

Are there other ways to search?

Yes, other options are available to help you in your searching. These give a range of flexible ways to manipulate your results:

1. Searching on levels

You can use the drop down menu for the 'Levels' field to restrict your search to parts of the catalogue rather than all of it. This type of search will search across collections, at the same hierarchical level.

You may wish to find out all the mentions of a particular person at file level for example, or just look at all the descriptions of collections (fonds).

- **Fonds** is the highest level of description, and describes the whole of a collection.
- **Sub-fonds** may represent a departmental structure or subject arrangement of an individual's papers
- **Series and sub-series** are the level where runs of minutes, series of files etc are described
- **File** describes a physical folder or unit, such as an individual minute book, an envelope of notes, a diary or a bundle of letters.
- **Item** level is for individual items such as a single letter. It is only occasionally used.
- **Collection** refers to a collection of photographs.
- **Image** is for individual photographs, within the Photographic Collection (PH).

2. Searching on Finding number

If you know the specific code for the collection (the 'Finding No'), you can use this to limit your search, for example searching for DF406 will restrict your search to the Keeper of Botany's subject files.

3. Truncation

You can search for parts of words using truncation. For example, map* will then search for maps, mapping etc.

* can be used at the beginning or end of words, and in the middle.

If you place * in a field, it will return all records where there is text in that field.

4. Using Word and Field options

You can use these options when you want to enter more than one word in a search field. Selecting 'And' gives you records containing one word and the other, 'Or' gives you one word or the other 'Phrase' gives you the words in the given order.

Using field options allows you to search for words in different fields such as 'Anytext' and 'Date'.

5. Widen/Narrow/Exclude

You can use these options to repeat a search and include more terms, which can wider or narrow your search, or exclude terms altogether.

Once you have your original search results, click 'Search Archive Catalogue' and enter another word:

- **Widen** will expand your results to include the new word.
- **Narrow** will remove any records from your original results that do not contain the new word.
- **Exclude** will remove any records from your original results which contain the new word.