BC Archives Search Tips

The Archives Collections Search is the entry point for searching the archival holdings of the BC Archives. The main search features are as follows:

- **New Features**
- **Basic Search**
- **Advanced Search**
- **Browse By**
- **Sort Results**
- **Record Description**
- **Useful Boolean Operators**

For more detailed information, please see the [Advanced Search](#) guide for AtoM.

**New Features**

In April 2018 we updated our Archives Collections Search database to AtoM, version 2.4. Below is a summary of the new features.

- Advanced Search display and filters
  - Date: You can now search by record date
  - Search by type of record: You can filter your results using the drop-down for General Material Designation.
- Identifiers and reference codes with a dash (-) no longer need to be entered in the search bar in quotes
- Default search between two key words is now AND instead of OR
- Reports function added
- Record hierarchy within a description appears at the top of the screen, instead of showing on the left-hand side

**Basic Search**

You can conduct a basic search of our archival descriptions using the Search Box at the top of the screen.

![Search Box](search-box.png)

You can enter any number of words in this box. The default Boolean operator is AND between each keyword. E.g. If you enter Douglas treaties the search engine will look for any description that includes the words Douglas and treaties. See some other [Useful Boolean Operators](#).

You may also see a drop down of suggestions when you type key terms into this box. These suggestions include archival descriptions, i.e., descriptions of archival records in our holdings, as well as access points such as authorities, places and subjects. Access points are linked to records descriptions. They are not descriptions of records but can direct you to records related to the specific access point.

Please note these suggestions are not the only records available. To search all available records, type in your key words and hit enter or click the search button [ ].
Archival descriptions: Descriptions of records in our holdings. These suggestions refer to specific record descriptions. Not all record hits are suggested.

Access points: These are access point records. Access points (people, organizations, places, subjects) are linked to descriptions. Please note that access points are not descriptions of records but can direct you to records related to the specific access point.

Advanced Search
You can conduct more complex searches by clicking on the Advanced Search hyperlink.

Or you can narrow your search results using the Advanced Search filters. Both links will open the same filter options.

Add Criteria
You can add one or more keywords and narrow by search field. You can also choose how to structure your keyword search by selecting one of the operators: AND, OR, NOT. You can add multiple lines to include more search criteria.
Filter your results
You can also filter your results by using the drop-down menus to select level of description, presence of a digital object (i.e., digital copy), or type of record (i.e., General Material Designation). You can also choose to view top-level descriptions (fonds, series) or all descriptions (fonds, series, file, item).

We are not currently using the finding aid drop-down feature. Finding aids are located in the Notes area of the record description.

![Filter results by](image)

You can also filter records by their dates of creation. You can search for records with dates of creation that overlap with your selected range or with dates of creation that fall exactly within your selected range.

The date fields initially display 100 years prior to the current year. For dates more than 100 years old, select the earliest date possible and then re-open the date field to go back further.

![Filter by date range](image)

Browse By
You can browse by selecting from the drop-down or by navigating to the left-hand side of the main screen. You can browse by archival descriptions, access points (people/organizations, subjects, or places) or by digital objects.

![Browse By](image)

- Archival descriptions are descriptions of records in our holdings.
- People/Organizations, Subjects and Places are access points that are linked to archival descriptions to help locate records related to that person, organization, place or subject.
- Digital objects are digital copies of records, and show when we have digitized the original archival record or item.
Search by access points or archival descriptions
You can search by access point, archival description, or digital object. For archival descriptions or digital objects, you can search using the Advanced Search filter. For the access points (People/Organizations, Subjects, Places) you can search by using the search bar within the access point screen. The default Boolean operator for each search bar is AND.

Access point descriptions are linked to archival descriptions of records at the BC Archives. You can navigate to the related archival descriptions which will either be displayed on the left-hand side of your screen (People/Organizations) or as a list below (Subjects, Places).

Sort Results
You can select how to sort your results list by using the sort by drop-down menu.

Record Description
Within each record’s description, you can see the record hierarchy. A records are described in a hierarchy with fonds or collections as the highest level of description followed by series, file, then item.

You can navigate between levels of description by clicking on each record’s description within the hierarchy. You can expand or collapse the series and files to see or hide the items within by clicking on the triangles. Not all lower level descriptions will be displayed. To see lower level descriptions, you will need to click “## more”.

You can also search for key words within a collection using the “quick search” tab.
Another way to view lower level descriptions in a collection is to click either “Browse as list” or “Reports” on the right-hand side of the screen.

If there is a digital object, you will see it displayed underneath the records hierarchy. If there are multiple digital objects, you can view them all by clicking “show all”

Series GR-3427 - Surveys Branch photo-topo
negatives

Ensure you read all elements of the records description so that you understand the types of records contained in the record group as not all records are described to the item level. The Scope and Content will tell you what is in the record group.
The Notes area has useful information such as whether there are any copyright or access restrictions, and if the record is available in other formats (e.g., digitized versions or microfilm versions).

Finding aids can be found in the Notes area in the section labelled Finding Aids, and are word searchable pdf documents. Most of our finding aids are linked to either the fonds or series level descriptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of originals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions on access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms governing use, reproduction, and publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding aids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Useful Boolean Operators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operators</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OR, NOT</td>
<td>Boolean operators used between key words to filter results. E.g., logs OR journals will search for descriptions with either logs or journals in the description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>()</td>
<td>Used with Boolean operators to conduct more complex searches. E.g., Douglas (diaries OR journals) will search for any description that includes the words Douglas and either diaries or journals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
<td>Used to search an exact phrase. E.g., “Vancouver Island” will search for descriptions with “Vancouver Island” as an exact phrase. You will also need to use quotations around special characters, such as reference codes with slashes (/) or colons (:). E.g., “F1981:17/043.03”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>Used as a multiple character wild card. E.g., journ* will search for journal, journals, journey, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Used as a single character wild card. E.g., licen?e will search for license or license</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more Boolean operators, see the [Advanced Search Guide](https://atom.bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/documentation/advanced-search-guide) for AtoM and scroll to the Boolean Operators section.