

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:

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- [Useful Boolean Operators](#)

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

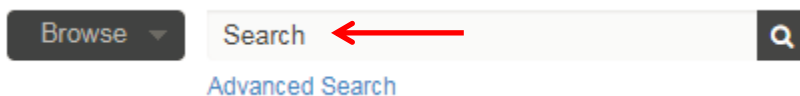
New Features

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.



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 .

James Douglas

- To James Douglas : File
 - Douglas, James File
 - James Douglas. Item
 - all matching descriptions*
- Sir James Douglas (Ship)
 - Helmcken, James Douglas, 1858-1919
 - Prentice, James Douglas, 1899-1979
 - all matching people & organizations*
- Douglas (B.C.)
 - Douglas Creek
 - Fort St. James (B.C.)
 - all matching places*
- Douglas fir
 - Cook, James, 1728-1779 DNU
 - Douglas Lake Ranch (B.C.)
 - all matching subjects*

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

Browse Search

[Advanced Search](#)

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

Only top-level descriptions

[Advanced search 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.

[Advanced search options](#)

Find results with:

Search in Any field

OR in Any field

[Add new criteria](#)

Enter key words

Select operator: AND, OR, NOT

Select search field

Add new key search terms

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](#).

Limit results to:

Top-level description

Filter results by:

Level of description Digital object available Finding aid

General material designation

Top-level descriptions All descriptions

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:

Start End

YYYY-MM-DD YYYY-MM-DD

Overlapping Exact

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

Archival descriptions
People/Organizations
Subjects
Places
Digital objects

OR

Browse

Archival descriptions
People/Organizations
Subjects
Places
Digital objects

- 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.

The search bar shows 'Alert Bay' with a red arrow pointing to the search input. Below it is a table with the following data:

| Places term | Scope note | Results |
|------------------|------------|---------|
| Alert Bay (B.C.) | | 161 |

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).

People/Organizations

The page shows the record for '100 Mile House V'. On the left, there are filters for 'SUBJECT OF' and 'CREATOR OF'. A red arrow points from the 'Associated record descriptions' box to the '100 Mile House Women's Institu...' entry under the 'SUBJECT OF' filter.

Places/Subjects

The page shows the record for 'Alert Bay (B.C.)'. A red box highlights the text 'Associated record descriptions' with a red arrow pointing down to the search results. The results show '222 results directly related' and a sample result: '"A fragment of the Indian graveyard, Alert Bay, BC, with ...'.

Sort Results

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

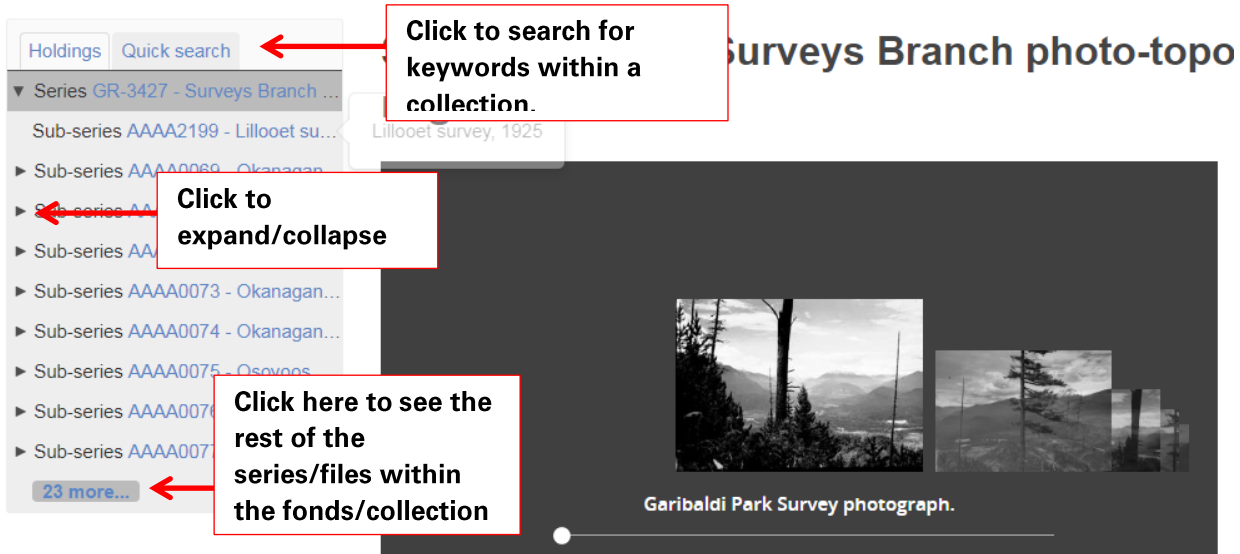
The screenshot shows a search results page with a 'Sort by: Alphabetic' dropdown menu open. A red arrow points to the dropdown arrow. The menu options are: Most recent, Relevance, Identifier, Reference code, Start date, and End date. Below the menu, the first result is visible: '"The Introduction and Progress of Home Economics in British Columbia" Typescript'.

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.

| Notes area | |
|---|--|
| Physical condition | Some plates broken. |
| Location of originals | Selected items are available in electronic form. |
| Restrictions on access | No access restrictions. ← Conservation restriction: when available, use digital copy. |
| Terms governing use, reproduction, and publication | Copyright belongs to the Government of British Columbia. ← |
| Finding aids | File list available. Selected items, and item descriptions, are available on the BC Archives visual records database. http://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Document/Finding_Aids_Atom/AA/ ← |

Useful Boolean Operators

| Operators | Description |
|-----------|---|
| OR, NOT | 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. |
| () | 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. |
| “ ” | 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” |
| * | Used as a multiple character wild card. E.g., jour* will search for journal, journals, journey, etc. |
| ? | Used as a single character wild card. E.g., licen?e will search for license or license |

For more Boolean operators, see the [Advanced Search Guide](#) for AtoM and scroll to the Boolean Operators section.