Find Archival Material at the Dalhousie Libraries

The Dalhousie Libraries holds an extensive collection of archival material to support research and teaching at the University and beyond. This handout provides an overview on how to find this archival material.

Basic archives search

Archival material is not catalogued in Novanet. You must conduct searches in the Archives Catalogue.

On the Libraries’ website (libraries.dal.ca), click on the “Archives” tab to search for archival material. Your search results will be presented in the Archives Catalogue.

Archives Catalogue

The Archives Catalogue has a similar basic search box but also allows you to browse by title, name of creator/author, subject, genre/form, and geographic place. The Catalogue also provides a variety of advanced search options (see page 2 for more information).

The map on the homepage of the Archives Catalogue provides a geographic visualization of catalogued archival material. Each plot on the map links to a list of archival material either created in that location or about that location.

If you are not finding the right search results, try reviewing the help pages available under the information icon in the top right corner of the page.

Search results

Search results show the total number of results and the number of results with digital copies of the material. You can filter results by name of fonds or collection, place, subject, level of archival description, and other terms.

You can sort search results alphabetically, by reference code, or by date. Each search result includes the title, level of description, date, scope and content note, and a link to the fonds or collection to which the material belongs. The result also includes a reference code that you will need to request access to the material. Click on the search result to view the full archival description.
Reference codes

Reference codes are unique identifiers assigned to each archival description in the Archives Catalogue. The codes usually include a unique collection identifier, box number, and folder number. The reference code can be found in the “Title and statement of responsibility area” of the archival description.

It’s also a good idea to write down the title of the material and the name of the fonds or collection.

Advanced search

If basic searches are providing too many results or not enough results, try using the advanced search form. You can search within specific fields, use Boolean operators, limit your results to a specific fonds or collection, or apply search filters for date ranges, type of material, or descriptions with digital objects.

Archives and Special Collections Reading Room

Archival material is non-circulating and must be viewed at the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room, located on the 5th floor of the Killam Memorial Library. Staff are available to help you locate archival material for your research projects, Monday to Friday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Guide to Archival Research

The Guide to Archival Research has comprehensive information on conducting archival research, including links to detailed instructions on how to browse and search the Archives Catalogue.

The Guide to Archival Research also provides information on how to use the Archives document delivery service, a free service that allows Dalhousie students, staff, and faculty to request digitized copies of certain items in the Archives Catalogue.

Contact information

Archives general reference / retrieval questions:

- Email: archives@dal.ca
- Phone: 902-494-6615
- Website: https://libraries.dal.ca/find/university-archives.html

Individual/group research consultations:

- Creighton Barrett, Digital Archivist and Music Librarian
- Email: Creighton.Barrett@Dal.ca
- Phone: 902-494-6490

Social media

- University Archives Facebook page
- University Archives YouTube channel
- @DalLibraries (Twitter)
- #DalArchives (Twitter)
- #Dal200 (Twitter)

Go to the Archives staff page for detailed contact information for all staff in the Archives department.