RecordSearch: an overview

RecordSearch is the National Archives' collection database. It is the quickest and most efficient way of finding out what is held in the collection, and of locating the records you want. RecordSearch is available in all National Archives research centres and on this website.

What does RecordSearch describe?

RecordSearch gives you online access to:

- descriptions of 60,000 collections (called series)
- details of 9000 creators and depositors (agencies, persons and organisations)
- descriptions of around 8 million record items (eg files, maps, posters), and
- digital copies of 1.2 million records

The National Archives continues to add item descriptions and digital copies to RecordSearch at a rate of several hundred thousand each year.

Because the database currently describes only about 20 per cent of all items in the collection, to ensure your search is comprehensive you should consult reference staff and search item lists and other finding aids.

Features of RecordSearch

You can use RecordSearch to:

- search for records that you can order for delivery to a research centre
- view digital copies of selected records
- search for information about collections, creators and depositors
- refine your search if it returns too many records
- register as a researcher – obtain a reader card number and login name, and set a password
- print your search results
- submit an access application, and
- order and pay for copies of records

You can also:

- customise and save the way you want RecordSearch to display your search results
- save and re-use your search results for up to one week, and
- view previous search criteria for up to six months

Search the collection

You can search the collection by choosing to: Begin your search, Register, or Sign in (using your login name and password).

If you choose to Begin your search, you won't be prompted to enter your contact details, but you will not be able to submit an access application, order records for delivery to a research centre or save your search results or preferences to use in the future.

If you Register you can save your search results, submit access applications, order records to view in a research centre, and customise the way RecordSearch displays results for you. You will need to enter your name and contact details and will then be provided with a login name and a reader card number. You will also be asked to choose a password (your password must be a string of at least six characters and contain a combination of letters and numerals). Next time you wish to search the collection, you can select Sign in.

Ordering records

You can only order records if you have registered your name and contact details in RecordSearch and received a reader card number and login name, and set a password. To order a record, select 'Issue to research centre' on the item details screen and submit the printout in the research centre. If you are using RecordSearch outside a research centre, you can complete and submit an advance request to view records form.

Viewing digital copies of records

Images of selected items in the collection are available to view on our website through RecordSearch. Where digital images are available you can view them by selecting the 'View digital copy' link on the Item details screen. *Fact sheet 249 – The National Archives' digitisation service* provides more information.

Exiting RecordSearch

If you signed in to RecordSearch and the computer you are using is shared (eg in a research centre, library or other public place), when you have finished searching you should select Exit RecordSearch to prevent your contact details being seen by others. By selecting Exit RecordSearch the next person will be unable to browse Back to access the screen where you keyed your name and contact details.

For more information

To use RecordSearch more effectively we suggest you read RecordSearch Help.

The following fact sheets may also be helpful:

- *Fact sheet 14 - Keyword searching in RecordSearch Advanced search screens*
- *Fact sheet 18 - NameSearch*