

Research centre rules

Most of the archival records made available to you in our research centres are unique and irreplaceable. It is our responsibility to manage and protect them so that they will be available for generations to come. The care with which you handle items is a very important factor in their survival.

On arrival please:

- leave your bags, cases (including laptop cases), and pens in the lockers provided. Any items taken into the research centre will be inspected by the officer on duty when you leave
- present your reader card. If you do not hold a reader card we will issue you with one after we have verified your identity and contact details
- complete the attendance register.

To safeguard our collection, please do not:

- bring any food or drink, including water, into the research centre
- use pens or ink – pencils are provided for your use
- remove any archival records from the research centre
- mark or annotate original records in any way
- dismantle, unfasten or remove folios from a file or interfere with the original order of papers.
- More detailed guidance on the handling of archival records is provided below.

Research centre etiquette

The research centre is a place for quiet study and research. We ask that while in the research centre you:

- sit in the designated area for viewing and photographing original records
- refrain from loud or unnecessary conversation with others
- generally be considerate of others using the research centre
- use PC internet connections provided only to access websites associated with your research
- note the location of EXIT signs for use in case of emergencies
- do not enter 'Staff Only' areas.

Refusal to follow these rules may lead to denial of access to archival material.

Handling archival records

Caring for records

- Archival records are unique and because of their age and format they may be fragile. Constant handling renders them vulnerable to damage or to loss of the information they contain. You can help prevent deterioration of the records you use by observing the following handling guidelines.
- Please ensure that your hands are clean and free from hand lotions and moisturisers. These lotions will cause the paper to stain and accelerate the deterioration process.
- Licking your finger to turn pages will also stain the paper. A finger stall can be used to help turn pages, but extra care must be taken with thin and fragile folios.
- Please handle all records carefully. Never force open a volume or a file. If you are unable to obtain information from a tightly bound spine, bring it to the attention of research centre staff.
- Please do not lean on, or trace from any records or use them as a support for writing.
- Please do not stack open files or place files within other files, as this places unnecessary pressure on the file and volume spine, and may lead to one of the files becoming lost or damaged.
- If you need to flag a page use a piece of clean paper (coloured paper slips are available in research centres for this purpose). Do not use Post-it notes or bulky objects such as pencils and spectacles as place markers.
- Do not underline, highlight or mark archival records in any way.
- Do not dismantle or remove any material from an item's fastening system.
- If you come across an item in poor condition, or with mould or insect damage, please bring it to the attention of research centre staff so it can be referred to Preservation for treatment.

Limit on the number of records issued

For the security and protection of the records, we have placed a limit on the number of records a researcher can view at one time. You will be issued up to five files, or one box of records. If you require more than this please discuss with the reference officer on duty.

Access to fragile records

Wherever possible, original records are made available to you in the research centre. In some cases, when the record is fragile or in an unstable condition, a reference copy will be provided. Alternatively, you may be asked to view an item under the supervision of Preservation staff. When the item is severely degraded we may have to withhold access to the original record completely. In these cases, which occur only occasionally, you will be given a statement of reasons that explains in detail why access cannot be granted.

Electronic surveillance cameras are used in National Archives research centres.