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How do I get started?

There are three ways to begin your search in AAD:

1. Free-text search of all records in AAD
 - o Type your search term(s) in the **Search AAD** box.
 - o Click on the Search button.
 - o Review [Tips for using free-text search](#).
 - o Use additional search options by clicking **Advanced Search**.
 - o Review [Tips for using Advanced Search](#).
2. Select a category from the **Browse by Category** section.
 - o Categories contain a list of series that are relevant to the category.
 - o Review [Tips for using Browse by Category](#).
3. Select a subject from a list of subjects.
 - o Click on **Browse by Subjects** in the Browse by Category section of the home page.
 - o Click on a subject for a list of series that are relevant to that subject.
 - o Review [Tips for using Browse by Subjects](#).

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What will I find in AAD?

You will find in the Access to Archival Databases (AAD) resource online access to records in a small selection of historic databases preserved permanently in NARA. Out of the nearly 200,000 data files in its holdings, NARA has selected approximately 475 of them for public searching through AAD. We selected these data because the records identify specific

persons, geographic areas, organizations, and dates. The records cover a wide variety of civilian and military functions and have many genealogical, social, political, and economic research uses. AAD provides:

- Access to over 85 million historic electronic records created by more than 30 agencies of the U.S. federal government and from collections of donated historical materials.
- Both free-text and fielded searching options.
- The ability to retrieve, print, and download records with the specific information that you seek.
- Information to help you find and understand the records.

We will continually add more databases to AAD. Check back periodically and consult the **What's New** section of AAD.

For further information about all of NARA's electronic records holdings, including those not in AAD, see the Electronic and Special Media Records [table of contents](#) page or NARA's online catalogue, [ARC](#).

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What won't I find in AAD?

You will not find in the Access to Archival Databases (AAD) resource most of the electronic records preserved permanently in the holdings of NARA. AAD contains just over 85 million historic electronic records. In contrast, the permanent electronic records at NARA total nearly **10 billion** electronic records.

You also will not find statistical analysis functionality.

With one exception, AAD does not include digitally scanned images of paper records, photographs, microfilm, and other non-electronic records. The one exception is the digitally scanned version of technical information about some of the databases.

For further information about all of NARA's electronic records holdings, including those not in AAD, see the Electronic and Special Media Records [table of contents](#) page or NARA's online catalogue, [ARC](#).

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Why does AAD look different?

We have redesigned AAD to increase user-friendliness and have added new functionality to enhance your searching. Should you have any problem locating records you have previously found in AAD, please contact us at cer@nara.gov.

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What help is available for me?

While navigating AAD, you have a variety of help screens, search tips, and frequently asked questions (FAQs). Look for the **AAD Tools** pull down menu in the top left portion of most screens. AAD tools has the [Getting Started Guide](#), [Terminology](#), and general [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Other screens give **File Information** that is accessible via a pull down menu at the top of the screen. The File Information pull down menu has links to the [Data Layout](#), [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) related to specific series and files and [Technical Information](#).

- Data Layout describes the technical structure, including **Field Name**, **Title**, **Data Type**, **Start Position**, and **Width**. If a field uses codes, the **Code List** is included in the data layout. The layout has field-level explanatory **Notes**.
- Series-specific Frequently Asked Questions generally describe the scope and content and function and use of the records, may provide useful search tips, or discuss any unusual characteristics of the records. You will find the series FAQs under the link, "FAQs and Technical Information."

- Technical Information can give you background information about the purpose and use of the records, technical specifications, and code lists with the meanings of [coded values](#). When we have included it, it will be under the link "FAQs and Technical Information." You may find it helpful to print it out and review it before starting a search. AAD has Technical Information when it adds to material in the AAD code lists or field-level notes. If you want to see the all of the technical information for any series, you may view it in person at the [National Archives at College Park](#), or [order photocopies](#).

Finally, we have prepared descriptions of the AAD [series](#) and [files](#). Series and file descriptions include narrative summaries of the [scope and content](#) of the records, [function and use](#) of the records by the creating organizations, coverage and creation (i.e., inclusive) dates, and many other descriptive elements. You can find the series or file descriptions by clicking on the red info link following a series or file title.

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How are records organized in AAD?

The databases in the Access to Archival Databases (AAD) resource are organized according to [series](#) and [files](#) and within the files, records. Some files consist of more than one data table. The series, files, and records are organized generally according to the way the creating U.S. federal government agency maintained the records and transferred them to NARA. For example, some federal agencies organized their database records into files based upon the year in which the records were created. At a later date, the agency transferred the annual files to NARA, where they were subsequently made available on AAD.

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Can I bookmark AAD pages?

Yes. Individual pages in AAD may be bookmarked using your browser. Follow your browser's instructions for doing this. You may also copy the URL in the address bar at the top of the browser window, and then paste it into a browser address bar to return to the same page at a later point in time.

Bookmarking is also a great way to share your finds with others. For example, you search in AAD for your great aunt's Women's Army Auxiliary Corps enlistment card from World War II. Once you locate it, you bookmark this record in your browser so that you can return to this page later. You can also copy the URL and paste it into an email message that you send to someone who can then paste the URL into his/her browser's address bar and see the same record. That person also will be able to navigate within AAD to search for and view other records, starting from this bookmarked page.

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Can I download records that I find in AAD?

Yes. Click on the link for Download Results on a Display Partial Records page for the downloading options.

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Can I print records that I find in AAD?

Yes, there is a printer-friendly option on each Display Full Records page. You get to a Full Record page by clicking on the HTML icon in the "View Record" column to the left of any record on the Display Partial Records page.

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What should I understand about archival electronic records?

Most of the electronic records in AAD were created by federal agencies to meet their own program or business needs. These records were not created with history, genealogy, or general public access in mind.

As a result, please note that:

- Some records contain typographical and other data entry errors. You will occasionally find, for example:
 - misspelled names,
 - inaccurate dates (e.g., February 31)
 - codes that are not identified in a code list
 - invalid data for the type of data field (e.g., monetary information in a date field)

As an archives, NARA's role is to preserve the integrity of the records that federal agencies transfer to it for archival preservation, even if the records include objective inaccuracies. For this reason, NARA does not correct or revise accessioned records.

- Data, such as dates, may be entered in a variety of ways. For example, one data file may display a date in the order of month, day, and year, or mm/dd/yyyy. Another data file may order the date by year, month, and day, or yy/mm/dd. NARA designed AAD to accommodate such anomalies by providing a consistent way in which to search the data, while ensuring that the data remains unaltered. For example, whenever possible, you may construct searches by date using the standard mm/dd/yyyy format, even though the actual field against which you are constructing a search might be structured as yy/mm/dd. The "value" column on the full record page will still show the original date format. In some cases, however, AAD could not standardize date information.

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Are there any restrictions on access to electronic records included in AAD?

Access to the electronic records transferred to NARA is subject to the terms of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Information in some data sets may be withheld in accordance with the exemptions authorized under the FOIA designed to protect national security, individual privacy, law enforcement investigations, or proprietary interest. Statutory restrictions on electronic records transferred into the National Archives remain in force until the records are 30 years old, unless extended by the Archivist of the United States. The National Archives and Records Administration protects against an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, in general, for 75 years.

In some cases where specific records or data elements within electronic records are exempt from disclosure because of a FOIA exemption, NARA may make an extract of the records in a disclosure-free version, also known as a public use (e.g., "sanitized") file.

All electronic records included in AAD are either in files that are fully open as received from the transferring agency, or are in a public use file, as described above. For further information, please see the access restriction note in the relevant series description or the [Code of Federal Regulations \(36 CFR 1256\)](#).

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Can I order complete copies of the data files included in AAD?

Yes, copies of complete data files included in AAD are available for a cost. Please see the [Ordering Information for Electronic Records](#) page.

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How do I cite electronic records?

See "[Guidelines for Citing Electronic Records](#)" in General Information Leaflet Number 17. In addition, NARA recommends that copies of electronic records retrieved via online research using AAD be cited by using the information elements that identify the relevant file, series, and Record Group, with the addition of a note in brackets with the date on which the record(s) were retrieved from the Access to Archival Databases resource.

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