

Using the preview of the new National Archives Catalog

Updated 9/29/2022

These instructions apply to the preview version of the [new National Archives Catalog](#) while it is in beta. As new features and functions are added to the Catalog, the help pages will be updated. For more information about this beta version, visit [Welcome to the New National Archives Catalog](#).

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What is the National Archives Catalog?

The National Archives Catalog is the online portal to the records held at the National Archives, and information about those records. It is the main way of describing our holdings and also provides access to electronic records and digitized versions of our holdings.

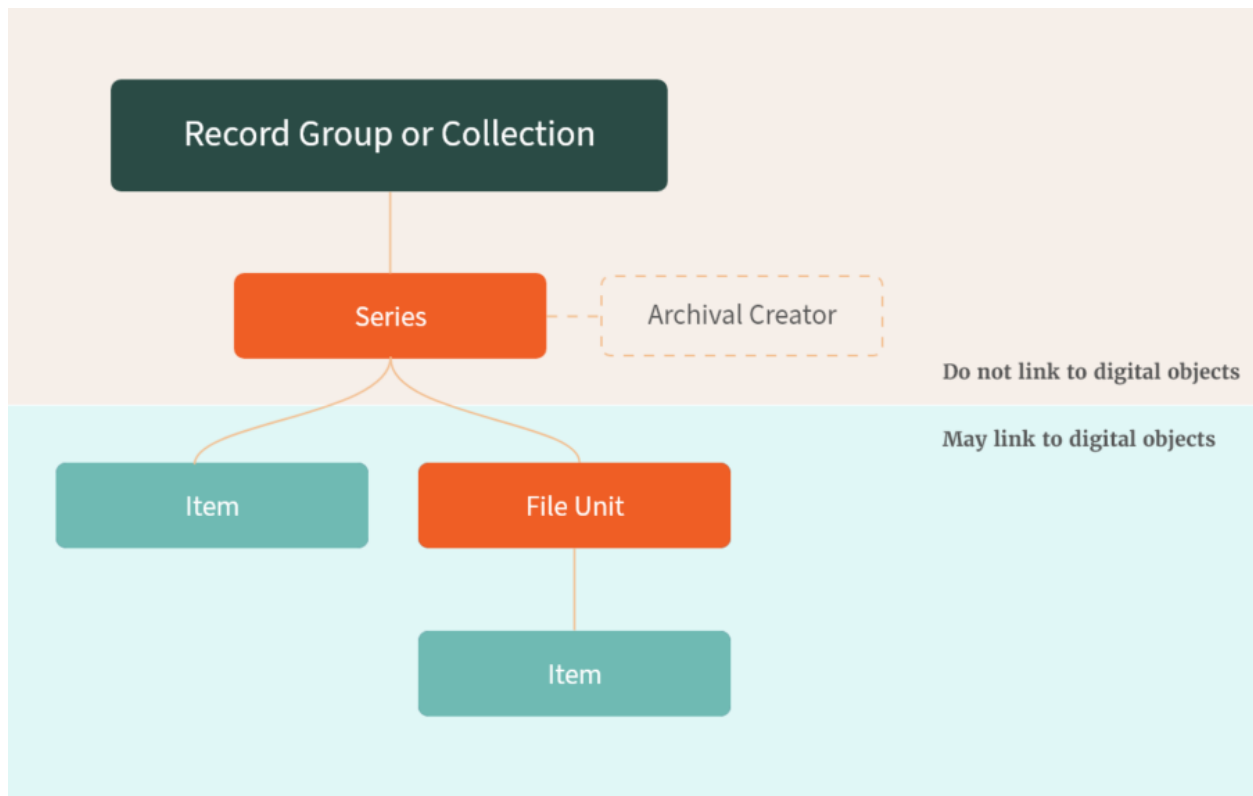
The Catalog searches across multiple National Archives resources at once, including archival descriptions, digitized and electronic records, authority records, and web pages from Archives.gov and the Presidential Libraries. The Catalog also allows users to contribute to digitized historical records through tagging and transcription.

What does the Catalog contain?

The Catalog currently contains archival descriptions of the National Archives' holdings, authority records, and millions of digitized and electronic records. Over 95% of the National Archives' holdings are described at the series level.

How are records in the Catalog organized?

Records described in the Catalog are organized according to NARA's archival hierarchy, which is defined in the Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide (LCDRG) - NARA's standard for archival description.



Record groups and collections are the highest level of archival description. Record groups most often contain accessioned records from federal agencies. Collections are generally made up of non-federal records that were donated to NARA, usually from presidential administrations.

Beneath the record group or collection is the series. A series is a group of records that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the course of the same activity. The

series is the descriptive level that is connected to the archival creator - the person or organization who created and/or maintained the records.

And beneath the series are file units or items. File units contain a more specific collection of related records within a series. A file unit often contains multiple discrete records, for example a grouping of memos. File units are always contained by series, while items can be contained by either series or file units. An item often reflects a specific record, for example a single memo. Both file units and items can contain digital objects, such as digitized pages produced from analog holdings.

How to Search

Enter one or more keywords in the search box and press enter on your keyboard, or click on the magnifying glass icon.

If you enter more than one keyword, the Catalog combines them with an 'AND' so that the search obtains results containing all the keywords.

Viewing Search Results

The Catalog groups all search results together under "All Records" and ranks them based on their relevance to your search terms or parameters. All records include descriptions and descriptions that include digitized records. Users may select "Available to access online" to view only descriptions that include digitized records.

1. By default, 20 results are shown on the first page. To view more results, click on page numbers or the arrows to advance to additional pages.
2. To increase the number of results displayed on each page, select the Results per page drop down arrow.

Sorting Search Results

By default the search results are ordered by the most relevant first. Change the sort order by choosing an alternative from the drop down *Sort by* button at the top of the search results screen.

The sort options include:

Relevance (default)

Title

National Archives Identifier

Viewing Full Results

1. To view a full result, click on the Title link in the results display.
2. If there is a digital copy, navigate between pages of a document using the previous and next buttons below the image or by clicking on one of the thumbnails to the right of the image viewer.
3. Scroll down to view the full description details. To go back to the search results page, click *Back to Search Results* in the upper left corner of the screen.

Refining a Search

The following search refinements allow you to narrow your search results:

Type of Materials (e.g. Textual Records, Moving Images, Sound Recordings)

Level of Description (Record Group, Collection, Series, File Unit, Item)

Data Source (Archival Descriptions with Digital Objects, Archives.gov, Archival Descriptions, Authority Records)

The following search refinements are coming soon:

File Format (e.g. Image (JPG), Portable Document File (PDF))

Location (e.g. reference unit)

Record Group / Collection

Date (year ranges)

Search refinements are provided on the left side of the search results page.

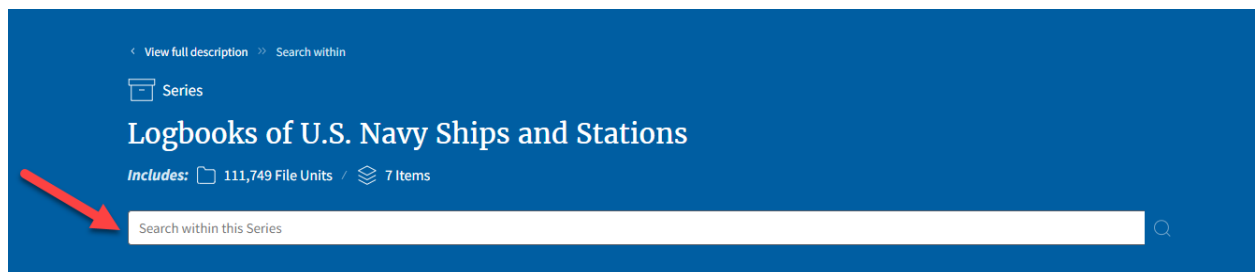
1. Enter a search term or keyword phrase.
2. On the results page, click on one of the search refinement options on the left side of the screen. The search will be refined further based on the new criteria added.
3. The selected refinement will be displayed below the *Refine by:* followed by an "X" (e.g., Refinements: Type of Archival Materials: Moving Images x). You may select additional refinements to further narrow your search results.
4. Click on the "X" following a refinement to remove the refinement and return to the original set of search results.

Searching Within a Record Group, Collection, Series, or File Unit

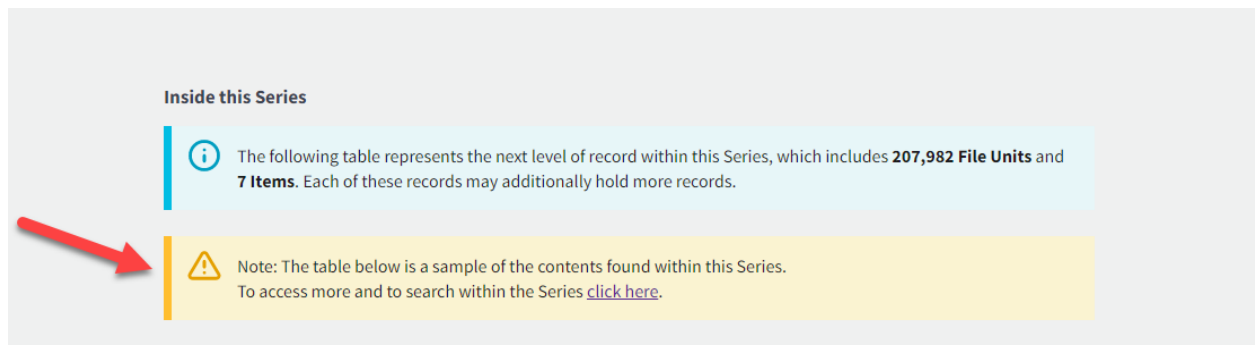
You may also perform a “search within” to search only for records contained within a particular Record Group, Collection, Series, or File Unit. To do so, navigate to the main description page for the Record Group, Collection, Series, or File Unit, and click on the blue hyperlink “Search within this Record Group/Collection/Series/File Unit” found in the black header below the title information.



This will take you to a page where you can search within using keywords in the search bar. Remove any existing words from the search bar and type a name, subject, or other keyword in the search bar.



Additionally, you can find another “search within” link in the *Inside this...* section of the description.



Catalog Accounts

A National Archives Catalog account is not required to use or search the Catalog. However, there are benefits to creating an account and logging in to search, such as:

- Create and save lists of records

- More search results are displayed

- [Contribute as a Citizen Archivist](#) by adding tags, transcriptions, and comments.

By signing up for a Catalog account you will be subscribed to the National Archives Catalog Newsletter. The Newsletter is emailed every other Thursday and you can unsubscribe at any time by clicking on the “unsubscribe” link at the bottom of each newsletter.

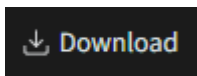
Please note: During the preview of the new National Archives Catalog, users are unable to create accounts, login to user accounts and contribute to records. Please visit the legacy [National Archives Catalog](#) to access your Catalog account and contribute as a Citizen Archivist. Stay tuned for more information about Catalog accounts and Citizen Archivist contributions in the new Catalog.

Citizen Archivist

During the preview of the new National Archives Catalog, users are unable to login and contribute. Please visit the legacy [National Archives Catalog](#) to contribute as a Citizen Archivist.

Saving a Digital Copy

1. Enter a search. Click a Title to view a full result.
2. In the full result display, click on the download icon



beneath the main image viewer to save the individual image.

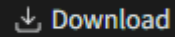
3. Advance to the next image and repeat.

Electronic Record Files

All electronic records that are available in the National Archives Catalog for viewing and/or download are linked to an archival description in the "Available Online" tab within search results.

The descriptions have options for viewing and/or downloading available files, as well as supporting technical documentation as appropriate.

Downloading Electronic Records:



To save a record found in the image viewer, click on the download icon beneath the main image viewer to save the individual image.

The screenshot shows a data viewer interface. At the top, there is a table with the following data:

Description_ID	AMS_No.	Size (bytes)	Record_Count	Record_Length
2058506	065106	802833840	654840	1226

Below the table, there is a "Download" button circled in red. The interface also includes a "Technical Specifications Summary" section with the following content:

Files Available for Download | 3

Electronic Records

1. [Download CSFSS Public Use Data File, 1995, compressed](#)
CSFSS.Y95.PU.zip, ASCII Text, 77 MB

Technical Documentation

1. [Download Technical Specifications Summary](#)
CSFSS_TSS264.pdf, Portable Document File (PDF), 99 KB

To download raw data files, right click on the blue download file title and select *Save as* or *Save link as*

		(carriage return and line feed); record length includes delimiters; some fields may contain zoned decimal (signed numeric) data that was auto-converted from EBCDIC			
CSFSS Public Use Data File, 1989	Description_ID: 2058506	XREF_No: 085106		Prepared: 12/21/2015	
File name: CSFSS.Y95.PU	Format: ASCII, fixed-length fields/records with two record-delimiters (carriage return and line feed); record length includes delimiters; some fields may contain zoned decimal (signed numeric) data that was auto-converted from EBCDIC	Size (bytes): 802833840	Record_Count: 654840	Record_Length: 1226	
12/21/2015	Single Family Housing Mortgage Data Files, 1987-2003			Page 1 of 5	

Technical Documentation | Technical Specifications Summary

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Electronic Records

1. [Download CSFSS Public Use Data File, 1995, compressed](#)
CSFSS.Y95.PU.zip, ASCII text, 77 MB

Technical Documentation

1. [Download Technical Specifications Summary](#)
CSFSS_TSS264.pdf, Portable Document File (PDF), 99 KB

Please note that files containing raw data are usually only available for download. Please refer to the Technical Specifications Summary for details on the format of the files.

Many electronic record files do not contain a standard file extension that indicates the format or file type, so these files are usually not appropriate for viewing within the browser

Technical documentation is also available for viewing and/or downloading in the Catalog. This consists of the materials or information needed to interpret raw data or otherwise use the electronic records. These may include agency-prepared record layouts, field descriptions, code lists or meaning, user notes, and the sample questionnaires or forms the agency used to collect the data.

The Technical Specifications Summary is also provided as part of the technical documentation. This is a list of all the electronic records files for a Series or File Unit description that are available online. This list includes the technical metadata for each file, such as the byte count, file format, record length (for fixed-length records), number of records, and file identifiers and names. This metadata is usually needed for using the files after they have been downloaded.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

For a link to acronyms and abbreviations commonly used in the Federal Government, see <https://ucsd.libguides.com/govspeak>. The foundation for this resource was the U.S. Government Manual.

Contact Us

For general or research questions, please visit <https://www.archives.gov/contact>

If you are experiencing an error or you have a question about your National Archives Catalog account, select *Login or Account Issues* on the contact form.

If you have questions about using the Catalog or suggestions for this help page, please email us at catalog@nara.gov.