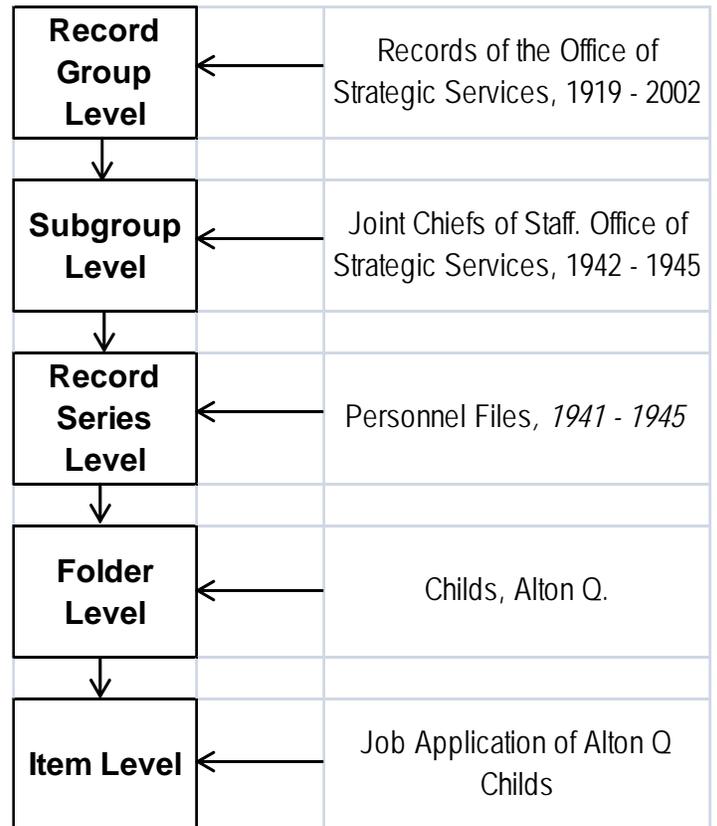# The National Archives Archival Research Catalog

The Archival Research Catalog (ARC) is the primary search tool to locate records held by the National Archives. It is a catalog describing the records of the National Archives in exactly the same manner as a card catalog in a library describes books. ARC contains record group descriptions, subgroup descriptions, records series descriptions, file unit descriptions, and item level descriptions. The Archival Research Catalog provides more detailed descriptions than the Guide to Federal Records. ARC is growing rapidly but, as yet, it does not describe all of the records in the National Archives. Nonetheless, it is still a valuable resource for genealogists, historians, and others.

Why Can't I Just Search For a Name?

Currently, all of the records of the National Archives have been described to the record group and subgroup levels. About 75% of the records have been described to the record series level. However, less than 10% have been described to the file level and less than 1% to the item level. As you can see from this illustration, the record group, subgroup, and series levels do not describe names of individuals or person-specific information. This means that when a genealogist currently uses ARC and searches by name, he or she will not generally retrieve all records containing the name they seek. This is because the ARC catalog does not contain an index of all names mentioned in each of the 10 billion records held by the National Archives.

The digitization partners of the National Archives, Ancestry.com and Fold3.com, are actively digitizing and indexing federal records. As they do this, file and item level descriptions are being generated for National Archives records. These images and indexes will eventually be input into ARC. In time, name searching in ARC will be common place. At present, it is effective only to a limited extent.

Record Group Level	Records of the Office of Strategic Services, 1919 - 2002
Subgroup Level	Joint Chiefs of Staff. Office of Strategic Services, 1942 - 1945
Record Series Level	Personnel Files, *1941 - 1945*
Folder Level	Childs, Alton Q.
Item Level	Job Application of Alton Q Childs

Instructions For Use of ARC

ARC is located on the National Archives website (www.archives.gov). From the National Archives main page click **Research Our Records**. On the resulting page select **Archival Research Catalog (ARC)**. This will bring you to the **Basic ARC Search Page** where you can initiate basic searches of the Archival Research Catalog using key words or phrases.

To perform an advanced search, click on **Search Options** from the **Basic ARC Search Page**. Then click on **Advanced Search** on the resulting page. This brings you to the **Advanced ARC Search Page**. On this page you have a large number of options for your search. You can search by key words, exact phrases, ARC identifier number if you know it, types of records (such as photographs), or level of description. You can also limit the search to only specific years or only to specific archives repositories in the National Archives system (such as the National Archives at Riverside). Once you have entered your search criteria simply click **Search**. This will produce a **Search Results Summary Page(s)** listing the names of record descriptions. Unless you have specified the level of description you want, you could see the names of record group descriptions, subgroup descriptions, record series descriptions, file unit descriptions, and even descriptions of individual items.

When you click on one of these description names on the **Search Results Summary Page** you will see the detailed descriptive information related to these particular records. It is important to note the **ARC Identifier Number** on each catalog record is unique to the records in question and is used to identify these particular records among all the records in the National Archives. There are four main tabs for each record description. The **Details** tab shows the catalog description of the records and where they are located. The **Scope and Content** tab explains more about the set of records. The **Archived Copies** tab tells you the volume of the records and recording media. The **Hierarchy** tab tells you the agency that created the records and the record series name. In cases where all, or some, of the records pertaining to the selected description have been digitized, and the image has been linked to the description, there will also be a **Digital Copies** tab. If there is a digital copies tab you can click on it and you will see the image of the document(s).

Alien Registration Affidavits, *compiled 02/06/1918 - 06/28/1918*
ARC Identifier 294758
Series from Record Group 21: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685 - 2004

| Details | Scope & Content | Archived Copies | Hierarchy |

Creator(s):	U.S. District Court for the Phoenix Division of the District of Arizona (1912 -)
Type(s) of Archival Materials:	Textual Records
Contact(s):	NARA's Pacific Region (Riverside) (NRHAR), 23123 Cajalco Rd, Perris, CA, 92570. PHONE: 951-956-2000; FAX: 951-956-2049; EMAIL: riverside.archives@nara.gov.
Inclusive Dates:	02/06/1918 - 06/28/1918
Part Of:	Record Group 21: Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685 - 2004
Includes:	179 items described in ARC 🔍 Search within this Series
Arrangement:	Arranged alphabetically by name of registrant.
Use Restriction(s):	Undetermined