

How to use Christchurch ArchivesSpace

If you're new to archival research or just new to ArchivesSpace, the below information will help you get started.

What is ArchivesSpace?

ArchivesSpace is a web-based information management system designed to provide greater access to the physical archive collections of Christchurch City Libraries, Christchurch City Council and Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

ArchivesSpace provides descriptions about physically held archive collections and links to digitally held content where these are available.

You can search ArchivesSpace at archives.canterburystories.nz

What terminology does ArchivesSpace use?

The below glossary has been created to help you to better understand some of the terminology used in ArchivesSpace.

- **Archives** are materials created or received by a person, family, or organisation that are preserved because of their long-term historical and cultural value.
- **Collections** are groups of materials assembled by a person, family or organisation. They may be divided hierarchically into series and the level of detail to which they are described varies.
- **Series** are groups of materials which sit together within a collection. It is a way to physically and intellectually manage large collections. You will often see multiple series within a collection, and you may also see sub-series. In some instances, individual files or items may be listed below a series or sub-series.
- **Repositories** are institutions or organisations that hold archival materials. Christchurch ArchivesSpace contains repositories for Christchurch City Libraries, Christchurch City Council and Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.
- **Name records** are the people, families, and organisations that create, donate, transfer, and/or are the subject of archival materials. Name records often contain information to support research and can be a good way to see all collections associated with a particular person, family, or organisation.

How do I search ArchivesSpace?

The easiest way to get started is to type your search terms into the search box from the main home page.

To help with text searching the following tips might be useful:

- Searches are not case sensitive.
- Phrases can be searched by using quotation marks (e.g "Festival of Flowers")
- When doing a search with multiple keywords you can add OR and NOT to customise what you would like to include.

By entering your search terms from the main home page, you will be searching across three different archive institutions: Christchurch City Libraries, Christchurch City Council and Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū.

To narrow your search to a specific institution you can select Repositories from the top left-hand side. Select the one you're interested in, and from there you can browse or search their collections specifically.

If you search across the three repositories from the homepage, you can also narrow the search by using the Additional Filters on the right-hand side of your results.

How do I narrow my search?

If you find that a text search is returning too many results, there are several ways you can narrow your search.

The *Search field* is a drop-down menu which tells ArchivesSpace which fields to search. Keyword searches will search the entire system so will return the most results. You can also narrow the search to:

- Title: This will search the titles of the material being described. This can be helpful if there is something specific you're looking for or have seen before.
- Creator: Searches the names of the people, families and organisations which created the records. It is important to note that this search will return a list of the creators and not the records they are associated with. You will need to open a creator to see which records they are connected to.
- Notes: Searches information included within any notes field across all records
- Identifier: This is a specific search for a unique number assigned to each record. If you have a specific identifier this search can help you find a record quickly.

Note that a search narrowed by using the Subject option will not return any results as subjects are not currently being used by Christchurch ArchivesSpace.

You can also limit your search by record type. *All record types* will search across all collections as well as creators. If you choose to *limit to collections*, this will narrow your results to collections and exclude creators and items described within collections.

Searching by date is another way you can narrow your search if there is a specific period you are interested in. Further complex searching can be done by selecting the + icon.

What's in a collection description?

Once you've opened a collection record you'll see a range of information describing the physical material including:

- **Content description:** There will always be a content description that summarises the collection including dates
- **Extents:** these are a measurement of the quantity of material that makes up a particular collection or item within a collection. Knowing the extent of a collection is key understanding how long it might take you use a collection (e.g. one volume versus 68 archives boxes)
- **Creators:** You will also see links to the creators of the collection which will take you to another page. These pages summarise the background to that creator and shows other collections they are associated with.
- **Conditions:** Any conditions that may affect how you access the material will be included as well as information about any items that might be digitally available.
- **Collection organisation:** Some collections are listed in more detail as part of a hierarchy. If this is available, it will show on the right-hand side under Collection Organisation. You can browse the different levels of the collection from here.