How to Use a Finding Aid, Your Research Tool

What is a Finding Aid? It's All about *Context*

A Finding Aid is a tool created to help you decide if holdings in the Archives will assist your research. Not all of the holdings have a Finding Aid. Check with the staff to see if we have created one for you.

Why Use a Finding Aid?

It is useful to read through a Finding Aid so that you do not spend time looking at irrelevant materials. Some Finding Aids provide links to digital materials.

Putting records into context

A Finding Aid groups archival records together, while summarizing their context and purpose. Descriptions are made at three levels – from the general to the specific. General descriptions include all of the records; then, specific groupings of records are described (i.e., financial records, correspondence); and, finally, individual items are listed.

Where to Start

Start by reading the general description of the records and the list of subjects. This will save you time by helping to determine if the records will be of any assistance to you. Pay attention to the title, date, and volume of records. Read through the historical notes and the scope and content.

Do these records seem like they will add value to your research?

Is so, then read on in the Finding Aid for even more context. The descriptions for specific groupings assist researchers to understand functions within the records. Finally, the file listing provides the number, the title and dates, and a brief description of the file's contents. If there is a digital file, it will be linked here too.

Where are the Finding Aids?

Finding Aids for the Annapolis Valley, Acadia University, and the Baptist Churches in Atlantic Canada are available online.

library.acadiau.ca/archives/find/findingaids.html

Digital documents are linked to the Finding Aids.

Acadia University Digital Collections are available online: openarchive.acadiau.ca/

Finding Aids sorted by subject

The Archival Research Guide sorts Finding Aids by subject on the FIND IT page. Examples include Sociology, Environmental Sciences, Music, and Education.

Archival Research Guide link: libguides.acadiau.ca/archivalresearch