



Ooops, should  
have used the  
side entrance!

# Tips for Archival Research

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“I Came,  
I Gathered,  
I Conquered”

-- Inquisitus Caesar,  
possible cousin of  
Julius Caesar



# Three Basic “Forms” of RECORDS

## 1. Published Works

- Open access shelving f/ vast majority
- Those with limited/monitored access: treat as **Textual Records**

## 2. Microfilm/fiche

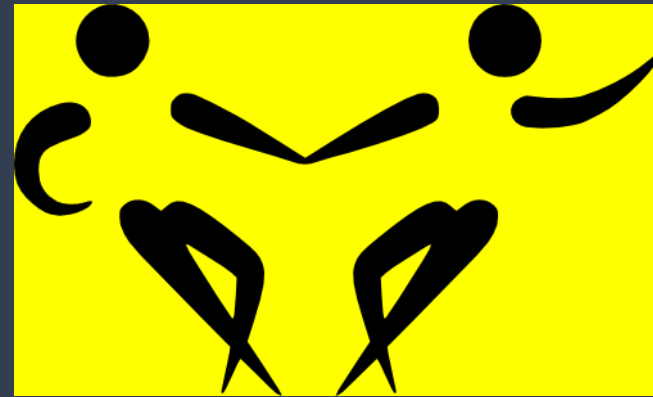
- Generally open access
- Bottlenecks: access to working, good quality readers, scanners, printers, & digitizing equipment.

## 3. **Textual Records** (continued)

# Three Basic “Forms” of RECORDS

## 3. Textual Records

- Understand the Dance Cycle
  - Researcher prepares “call” slips
  - Staff retrieves or “pulls” the records, sometimes at set times
  - Researcher returns all materials daily
- Each repository has its own process
- Textual material that has been filmed or digitized
  - Staff usually will **NOT** pull a textual record that is filmed or digitized.
  - Staff are usually willing to pull the textual record if the film or digitized image is **illegible**, but usually you must **show** them.



# Three Basic “Forms” of FINDING AIDS

- Published
  - Unique to a Record Group
  - Unique to a Series or Collection
- Catalogs
  - Cards
  - Digital
- Human
  - Paid Staff
  - Unique volunteers - “citizen archivists”
  - Local Researchers (available for hire)

# Human Finding Aids Example: NARA Military Records

- Jonathan Webb Diess
  - “Citizen Archivist” specializing in NARA military records
  - <http://soldiersource.com>
- Craig Roberts Scott, CG
  - Highly regarded Lecturer on Military Records
  - BCG Roster of Certified Genealogists
  - <https://bcgcertification.org/directory/scott-craig-roberts-cg/>

# Tips 1-2: Research at Archives (part 1)

- Logistical concerns: do your homework before going or hiring anyone.
  - Online Catalog access possible?
  - Compare Online Catalog's county record holdings with County Records Inventory (reported by county courthouses).
  - Compare Online Catalog's newspaper holdings with commercial & free search vendors.
- Visit #1: **Ask for a local researcher list!** Ask staff to point out any on list who are working onsite.



Compare  
Online  
Catalog  
holdings  
with  
County  
Records  
Inventory

Mississippi Department of  
**MDAH**  
Archives and History

Online Catalog

Search

[Advanced search](#) | [Authority search](#) | [Search Tips](#)

[Home](#)

**QUICK LINKS**  
[Research at the Archives](#)  
[Research Requests](#)  
[FAQs](#)  
**LOCATION:**  
MDAH  
200 North Street  
Jackson, MS 39201  
601-576-6850  
**HOURS:**  
Sun CLOSED  
Mon 9 am - 5 pm  
Tues-Fri 8 am - 5 pm  
Sat 8 am - 1 pm

**Tips for searching the catalog:**

- For a Simple search, enter keywords like title words, an author's name, or subject terms.
- Use the search drop-down menu to search for a specific subject, author, series or title.
- Use the Advanced Search to limit your results to specific kinds of resources, like manuscripts, yearbooks, periodicals, etc.
- Use the Authority Search to search the subject headings authority file.
- For more details on searching, click [Search Tips](#).**

**Additional Research Tools**

Master List of Microfilm

Natchez District : Sources in the Manuscript Collections

Alfred Holt Stone Collection

Electronic Records

Electronic Archives

Tools

Soundex Helper

Bibliography of Mississippi History by Brenda M. Eagles

Inventory of Historic Maps of Mississippi by Paul Davis

Pre-1920 County Records Inventory

Quick Searches

African-American Confederate Pension Applications

Audio, Film and Video Collections

Biographical Index

Cemetery Index by Cemetery Name

Cemetery Index by County

Cemetery Index by State

County Court Case Files

County Records on Microfilm

Court Case Files - Death Penalty

Court Case Files - Supreme Court

Family Coat of Arms

Freedmen's Bureau Record Index

Manuscript Collections

Mississippi Asylum Cemetery Records

Newspaper Holdings by Title

Newspaper Holdings by Town or County

Non-County Court Case Files

Non-Mississippi Newspaper Holdings

Photograph Collections

Subject Files

Territorial Governors' Calendars



Compare  
Online  
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holdings  
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County  
Records  
Inventory

#### Tools

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[Cemetery Index by Cemetery Name](#)

[Cemetery Index by County](#)

[Cemetery Index by State](#)

[County Court Case Files](#)

[County Records on Microfilm](#)

[Court Case Files - Death Penalty](#)

[Court Case Files - Supreme Court](#)  
[Family Coat of Arms](#)

[Freedmen's Bureau Record Index](#)

[Manuscript Collections](#)

[Mississippi Asylum Cemetery Records](#)

[Newspaper Holdings by Title](#)

[Newspaper Holdings by Town or County](#)

[Non-County Court Case Files](#)

[Non-Mississippi Newspaper Holdings](#)

[Photograph Collections](#)

[Subject Files](#)

[Territorial Governors' Calendars](#)

# County Records Inventory reported December 2011 by Jasper County, Mississippi (formed 1833): **176** items for period 1833-1920.

## Pre-1920 County Records Inventory Index for Jasper County - 176 hits

### Pre-1920 County Records Inventory in Jasper County inventoried Dec 2011

Record Title	Start Date	End Date	Volume #	Notes	Office
Abstract of Title	Dec 1837	Feb 1906			Chancery Clerk
Abstract of Title	Feb 1837	Apr 1906			Chancery Clerk
Abstract of Title	Jun 1837	Feb 1906			Chancery Clerk
County Court Minutes	Sep 1852	Jun 1873	1	Minute & Warrant Book - County Court	Chancery Clerk
Deed Books	May 1906	Apr 1907	1		Chancery Clerk
Deed Books	Apr 1907	Sep 1908	2	No Microfilm at State Archives for Volumes 2-3	Chancery Clerk
Deed Books	Feb 1907	Jan 1910	3		Chancery Clerk

# Tips 3-6: Research at Archives (part 2)

- Ask staff who the lead experts are for the record category or timeframe of interest.
- Spend time learning what the staff use for finding aids & how to access them yourself, if permitted.
- Record “pulls” at busy facilities take time.
  - Prepare your “call slips” for textual records early in each day/week.
  - For each group of records being pulled, **check one call slip with staff** before submission **to avoid resubmission**.
  - Digitize or copy your call slips before submission.
  - Digitize (or document) box & folder labels with corresponding call slip.
  - Ask where bottlenecks are time-wise (e.g. printing/photocopying).
- Staff sometimes include “citizen archivists” or volunteers who specialize in particular records, usually well-respected by staff.

# Tip 7: My Typical Day at Archives

- Call slip preparation
- While waiting for record pulls
  - Access finding aids, abstracts & transcriptions not checked before arrival.
  - Use microfilm, vertical files, & card files.
- **Gather** versus **Analyze**: Gather wide variety of records efficiently.
  - Ask archivists about record categories that are underutilized.
  - Exhaust target counties' records, including surrounding counties of that time/place.
  - Use period maps & archivists' experience to project migration patterns.
  - Exhaust prospective county records along migration routes, **especially along watersheds, trails, & "roads."**
  - **Some record types should be imaged or printed "en masse" to capture friends, associates, & neighbors.**
    - Tax lists, petitions, original census lists at state & county level.
    - Regimental & company lists.
    - Land & probate records for ALL persons in prospective kinship groups.

# Tip 8: My Typical Overnight at Archives

- **Copy images to laptop hard drive & to off-site storage** (e.g., [www.dropbox.com](https://www.dropbox.com)).
- Double-check copy process, then delete images on cameras & flash drives if space is needed tomorrow.
- Recharge batteries & power banks.
- Analyze (high level) day's results & revise research plan for tomorrow.

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