

Arkansas History Term Papers: Using Manuscript Materials in Special Collections

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You will be ready to use primary sources after you have selected your research topic, explored secondary literature to see what has already been published on the topic, and read background material to identify key events, figures, and dates related to your topic.

1. Identifying manuscript materials available in the Special Collections Department may involve several steps:
 - a. check the Libraries' online catalog InfoLinks
Materials identified with **Spec Coll** in the "Location" box on an InfoLinks record means that they are located in Special Collections.
 - b. check the Special Collections home page
 - subject lists, available online at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/manuscripts/default.asp#guides>
 - alphabetical list, available at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/findingaids/indexnew.html>
 - use the Search option in the left sidebar of our home page to do a Google search of our online finding aids
 - selected materials that have been converted to digital format are listed at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/specialcollections/exhibits/>
 - c. check indexes in paper format in the Special Collections Reading Room
 - d. consult Special Collections Department staff
 - come to the department Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and most Saturdays during the semester 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
 - call 479-575-8444, or
 - send an email message to specoll@uark.edu
2. Using manuscript materials available in the Special Collections Department will involve procedures not necessary in other parts of the library, for example:
 - a. Special Collections materials are shelved in closed stacks so you will need to identify specific materials to be brought to you in the Reading Room.
 - b. Special Collections materials may not be checked out, they must be used in the department's Reading Room.
 - c. Bookbags and all other enclosed containers may not be taken into the Reading Room. Lockers are available.
 - d. Only pencils may be used in the Reading Room.
 - e. Only Special Collections staff make photocopies of materials (and only if doing so will not damage the material).
 - f. Careful handling is required because these materials are one-of-a-kind and often fragile.
 - g. Other special procedures and regulations are listed on a handout available in the Reading Room and online.

3. What will you find in a manuscript collection?
Each manuscript collection is a unique group of materials created and/or collected by an individual, group, or organization. A collection may include letters, diaries, memoirs, business ledgers, photographs, drawings, scrapbooks, maps, reports, clippings, and more.
4. The materials in manuscript collections are arranged with like materials together then filed alphabetically, chronologically, or thematically depending upon which form of arrangement will make the materials most useful.
5. A finding aid is created to outline the arrangement of the materials in a specific collection. To locate material within a collection relevant for your topic, consult the finding aids for collections of potential interest which you have identified through the resources described in 1. above.

Finding aids for most of our collections are available online at <http://libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/findingaids/indexnew.html>. Finding aids for some collections are available only in paper format in our Reading Room.

6. To examine materials in a collection, you will need to:
 - complete an "Application for Research Privileges" form,
 - show a photo identification (for example, a university id or driver's license), and
 - complete a "Call Slip" identifying the material you wish to see.
7. On the Call Slip, you will need to identify the name of the collection, the MC number assigned to it, and the box number you wish to see. Some collections consist of hundreds of boxes, identifying the box number is necessary so that we can retrieve the relevant material. You should also make a note for your use of the folder number for each file in the box that you will want to examine.
8. Be prepared to take notes and record carefully the sources in which you find them. This may save you the cost of some photocopies and will save you time when preparing your paper.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONSULT THE OTHER HANDOUTS IN THIS SERIES:

Arkansas History Term Papers: Tips for Getting Started

Arkansas History Term Papers: Locating Secondary Sources

Arkansas History Term Papers: Locating Published Primary Sources

Arkansas History Term Papers: Using Historical Newspapers on Microfilm