How to Search GVSU Special Collections & Archives
An introduction to finding materials in our ArchivesSpace information management system

Getting Started
Go to: https://gvsu.lyrasistechnology.org/

ArchivesSpace is the archival equivalent to the Libraries’ catalog. In ArchivesSpace you can find out what collections and materials University Archives and Special Collections holds.

Searching
From the homepage, enter your search term in the box, or click on “Collections” in the upper left to browse materials.

Enter your search term in the box, or click on “Collections” in the upper left to browse materials.

If you choose to search by keyword, you will want to read the results list carefully.

In this sample search for “postcard” our results include a full collection

An item within a collection (indicated here)

And a file, also from within a collection
No matter what kind of result you get back, there will also be a brief description or “scope and contents” note about the collection excerpted as well as the date range.

There are other ways to search in ArchivesSpace. You can choose to search by a subject heading by clicking on “Subjects” in the top menu bar, or if you are looking for a particular person, organization, or committee you can choose to search by “Names”.

You may also see Names pop up in your search result list. Clicking on one of these will show you a results page of every collection that is linked to that particular person or organization.

Subject terms work in the same way. Choosing one of the standardized terms ensures that you use the right terminology when looking for materials (i.e. “diaries” instead of “journals”). If you click on a term, it will take you to a list of every collection linked to that subject.

Citing Materials
Keep notes of what you find, both to help you find the item later to view and for citation purposes. Use both the identifier and the collection title in your citations, as well as relevant box and folder numbers, so future researchers can easily find the materials.

Title of the collection
Understanding Your Results

When you click on the title of the Collection, you will be taken to the collection’s Finding Aid. A Finding Aid is an organizational tool that provides additional information about the collection that may be useful to researchers.

Every collection will have similar fields, including a “Scope and Contents” note that provides a collection overview, date range, creator name, how to access the materials, and publication rights statement.

Personal papers will have a “biographical note” while institutional collections will have an “administrative history” note.

The Finding Aid will also tell you the extent of the collection – how big is it? – and what language the materials are in.

On the right-hand side, there is an expandable menu for the Collection Organization. You can view the collection’s contents by clicking on the arrows.

Some collections are organized into Series, like the Francis J. Mee Papers seen here. If you wish to view the whole series, you can click on the Series title to see which boxes or folders the series encompasses.

If you wish to see more details about a particular item, click on the title and you will be brought to an Item-level record page.
Viewing Archival Materials

When you click on an Item title from the Collection Organization list, the heading at the top of the page will change. This is where you will find the relevant information to make your specific research request.

If you wish to view this item in the Reading Room, you would request: RHC-169 France Mee Papers Box 1.

For a small collection like the Mee Papers (6 boxes) it’s perfectly fine to request to view the whole collection during a research visit. For a larger collection, like the Jim Harrison Papers (366 boxes) you will want to be more specific.

All interesting collections or items that you find in ArchivesSpace must be viewed in the GVSU Special Collections and University Archives Reading Room. The Reading Room is located in Seidman House on the Allendale campus.

However, some records might contain links to digital objects, which can be viewed online at https://digitalcollections.library.gvsu.edu/.

Digital Objects

When you search, you may find some results that say “Digital Collection”. This means the collection or item has been placed online for access.

Open the record by clicking on the title. Then, click on the red box labelled “Digital Object”. You will be taken out of ArchivesSpace and into our digital collections platform.