



■ What are manuscripts and archives?

Manuscripts and archives are documents produced by organisations or individuals in the course of activity, and preserved because of their continuing value. Unlike published material, they usually comprise one copy only, and as such, are unique and irreplaceable.

Some types of manuscripts and archives are correspondence, notes, diaries, literary drafts, financial records, minutes, and reports. They are sometimes referred to as **papers** or **records**.

- **Papers** generally refer to manuscripts created by an individual person or persons. Personal papers are usually held in manuscript libraries.
- **Records** generally refer to documents created by an organisation. These are usually held in archives.

The terms “manuscripts”, “archives”, “papers” and “records” are sometimes used interchangeably. The term “archive” might refer to a collection of papers, or the building that houses them.

■ Where are they held in Australia?

Generally, an **archive** is a part of the organisation whose records it holds. It does not collect records from outside that organisation. There are some notable exceptions, however, such as the Noel Butlin Archives Centre in Canberra, which collects records relating to business and the labour movement.

Manuscript libraries **collect papers from outside their own walls, to create research collections**.

Archives

- **Government archives.** In Australia, this comprises national, state and local government archives (eg. National Archives of Australia, Queensland State Archives, Brisbane City Council Archives; also the National Film and Sound Archive). Internationally, major national archives include the National Archives in the UK and US.
- **Organisation archives.** Archives of churches, historical societies, hospitals, schools, businesses, universities, museums and other organisations.
- **Libraries.** In Australia, libraries with significant manuscript collections include the National Library of Australia, Mitchell Library (part of State Library of New South

Wales), John Oxley Library of Queensland History (part of State Library of Queensland), and Fryer Library (part of University of Queensland Library.) Internationally, significant libraries include the British Library and the Library of Congress in Washington DC

■ How do I find out where they are held?

A. Consult a location guide or register.

These provide information about where manuscripts and archives are held, and summary information about the collections. They do not provide detailed descriptions of collections. There are 2 broad categories of location guide : general and subject –specific.

1. General location guides

AUSTRALIA

Register of Australian Archives and Manuscripts

<http://www.nla.gov.au/raam/>

A centralised register of locations for primary research material in Australia. Includes summary descriptions of manuscripts. Does not include government records.

Directory of Archives in Australia

<http://www.archivists.org.au/directory-of-archives>

Contact details for archives and manuscript collections in Australia, including basic summaries of holdings.

UNITED KINGDOM

National Register of Archives

<http://www.nra.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra>

Information on the nature and location of manuscripts and historical records that relate to British history.

ARCHON Directory

<http://www.archon.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/>

Contact details for archives listed in the National Register of Archives.

2. Subject-specific location guides

Location Register of Twentieth-Century English Literary Manuscripts and Letters : a Union List of Papers of Modern English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh Authors in the British Isles.

SS&H Ref Z6611.L7L63 1988- v.1 & 2

Manuscripts in the British Isles relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.
Editor, Phyllis Mander Jones

Fryer Ref, SS &H Z4001.M3 1972

B. You can also consult a union catalogue or database.

These are similar to location guides, in that they gather together information about a number of archives and manuscript libraries. They provide detailed descriptive information about the contents of manuscript libraries and archives. Some are general and some subject-specific.

1. General union catalogues and databases

UNITED STATES

National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections

<http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/nucmc.html>

Access to the United States national database of manuscript holdings.

EUROPE

MALVINE : Manuscripts and Letters via Integrated Networks in Europe

<http://www.malvine.org/>

Post-medieval manuscripts in selected European repositories.

2. Subject-specific union catalogues and databases

Guide to Australian Literary Manuscripts

<http://findaid.library.uwa.edu.au/>

A database of finding aids for 86 collections of Australian literary manuscripts. The finding aids can be individually searched, or all can be searched at once by keyword.

■ How do I locate and identify the papers I need within the archives or library?

When you have established which archive or manuscripts library holds the papers you wish to use, consult its **finding aids** or **catalogue** for details. Because archives and manuscripts are different from published material, they are described differently. "Finding aids" are guides to collections, which provide detailed inventories of the collection's contents. Many finding aids are only available in paper format, and can only be consulted at the archive or manuscript library which produced them. However, an increasing number of finding aids are available online. Also, many manuscript libraries, including the National Library of Australia and the University of Queensland Fryer Library, now describe their manuscript holdings in their online library catalogues.

National Archives of Australia RecordSearch

<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/recordsearch/index.aspx>

Commonwealth government records. RecordSearch is the collection database.

Queensland State Archives Database Search

<http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/research/searchdatabase.asp>

Records of state government departments, statutory authorities and government-owned corporations.

National Library of Australia Manuscript Collection

<http://www.nla.gov.au/ms/>

Manuscript collections are described both in detail (through Manuscript Finding Aids) and in summary (through the Manuscript Catalogue.)

University of Queensland Library Catalogue

<http://www.library.uq.edu.au/>

Catalogue records for manuscripts held in Fryer Library can be found in the University of Queensland Library catalogue. Most of these records link to detailed listings of the contents of manuscript collections.

Manuscripts Queensland

<http://manuscriptsqld.slq.qld.gov.au/home>

Manuscripts at the State Library of Queensland.

University of Queensland Archives

<http://www.uq.edu.au/recordsmanagement/index.html?page=30117&pid=29937>

British Library Manuscripts Catalogue

<http://molcat.bl.uk/>

Search the British Library's collection of Western manuscripts.

National Archives (UK)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

UK government records.

National Archives (US)

<http://www.archives.gov/research/>

US government records.

■ How do I use manuscripts and archives?

Because archives and manuscripts are often irreplaceable, valuable and fragile, most archives and manuscript libraries have special rules about their use.

It is advisable to contact the archives or library before your visit.

Usually you can't browse the shelves of an archives or manuscript library. You will need to identify from the finding aid or catalogue the papers you wish to consult, and then make a request for the material.

Archives and manuscripts are usually organised according to "provenance", or the person or organisation who created or accumulated the documents. They are not organised by subject, or what they are "about". This means that when you are searching for archives or manuscripts, you will need to consider **who** is the most likely person or organisation to have created the documents, and then orient your search towards this.



Ask at the **Information Desk** in any Branch Library