

Whyte Museum Workflow for Archives & Special Collections Research During COVID-19

Preliminary Research:

Once you've determined that you have done all other previous research from a vast selection of other resources available to you (if you need some tips for your preliminary research phase - email archives@whyte.org for lots of great suggestions!) and have narrowed down your topic of research - let's peruse the Whyte Archives & Special Collections Library database!

Step One - The Search:

- Access the Archives and Special Collections Database here:
<https://archives.whyte.org/>
- Search by typing keywords pertaining to your research in the search field
- You can narrow your search to just archival materials by checking off **Limit To -> Archives**
- You can narrow your search to just library materials by checking off **Limit To -> Special Collections**
- You can also narrow your search to just photographs by checking off **Limit to -> Photographs** - do note that if the image is digitized and available online, the physical item will not be pulled unless absolutely necessary - one of the perks of being able to view digital surrogates online is the reduction of the handling of primary resources which ensures their preservation and longevity
- You can further narrow your search initially by using **Advanced Search and Browse** link at the far right under the search field

- Once you've conducted your search, you'll need to review the search results for those materials that are most relevant to you and revise your search if necessary - do this by reading all the information available in the descriptions
- As you review the descriptions for each entry - be sure to click **More Detail** to see all related information including *Physical Description* (how much and what kinds of material is included) and *Description Level* (which will tell you if what you're requesting is fonds level, sous-fonds level, series level, file level, or description level) – if you need to sort by other parameters – use the blue drop down menu's at the left:
 - Collection
 - Fonds
 - Archival Description Level
 - Decade
 - Place
 - Subject
 - Online Media Type (to ONLY see items that have digitized files associated with them)
- You may need to narrow your search as needed to get to the right level and ensure you aren't requesting dozens of boxes of materials when you really just need to consult one file in one box

Step Two - Making Selections:

- As you review descriptions and determine which materials you'd like to physically view, click the **Select** button at the bottom of the entry for those you are interested in
- This will add this record to your list at the top right of the page under **View Selections**
- Once you are done your various key word searches and reviewing record descriptions, click on **View Selections** and review your list
- Once you've reviewed your list, omitted or added anything as needed, you're ready to submit your request to view the materials

Step Three - Submitting Request

- From your ***View Selections*** list click ***Request More Information*** button at the left
- This sends your list directly to archives@whyte.org
- Your list will be reviewed and you will be contacted via email to make an appointment

OR

- If you are unable to travel to the Archives & Special Collections in person, there is the option to have archival staff do research for you at \$25/half hour – please contact us archives@whyte.org if you require this option
- Once the appointment is confirmed, a meeting invite in Outlook will be created that includes your list of materials and you will be invited – the list will be printed out and left on your cart for you to consult during your appointment

Step Four - Your Appointment

- Prior to your appointment the materials from your list will be pulled to fill your cart
- The cart will be ready for you in the reference room area on your appointment day - please sit where the cart is parked and do not change seats during your appointment
- Wash your hands prior to reviewing the materials, and wash hands often and as needed as your hands may get grimy the more materials you handle - please use the washroom in the reference room and clean everything you have touched after using
- Refrain from touching your face - these oils can damage materials
- Do not lick your finger to turn pages
- Please bring your own pencil and paper for making and do not bring any pens as ink can damage materials irreparably
- Do not take notes on top of any materials

- Take one box off the cart at a time and only consult one box at a time, removing one file at a time from the box and replacing that file before removing the next
- Keep everything in the file and in order in the file – read the file like a book
- Gloves and light boxes and book supports and acid-free book marks will be included on your cart if they are required (ie. to view negatives, transparencies and albums) - do not help yourself to these items around the reference room.
- You may take reference photographs of materials you'd like to consult later with your phone or iPad - when taking pictures ensure the folder or item number is recorded or you are recording the item number in your notes to ensure you can locate later if needed. Ensure the flash is off
- No food or drink in the reference room
- When you are done staff will wipe down the table, light switches, washroom, door knobs, light box, books supports, cart handles, and anything else you may have touched (DO NOT wipe down or clean the archival or library materials)
- Ensure all materials are replaced on the cart and leave the cart in the reference room
- Materials will sit on the cart for 72 hours - giving any viruses present on the archival and library materials enough time to die before handling and refiling

Step 5 - Support!

- If you have any questions about research, materials, access or anything at all - please email archives@whyte.org and we will be more than happy to assist you!
- This blog post by Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives is a great resource to understand the role and function of archives:
<https://peelarchivesblog.com/2019/01/23/how-can-you-help-an-archivist-to-help-you-reference-service-from-our-side-of-the-desk/>