
Reading Room Rules

101 Customer Service Guide

**Most Recent Update:
December 2017**

Researchers are reminded that they are working with historical records, which are unique and often very fragile. These rules outline your responsibilities as a researcher to help us preserve the holdings of the Archives of Ontario. Please note that these rules apply to all researchers and staff of the Archives of Ontario.

Use of the Reading Room is intended for individuals completing research projects using material from the collections of the Archives of Ontario only. For Outreach or group activities, please contact the Outreach Unit.

1. Personal belongings including briefcases, purses, backpacks, folders, umbrellas, and outerwear such as overcoats and raincoats must be stored in the Customer Lounge lockers on the ground floor. Archival material cannot be stored in the Customer Lounge lockers.
2. Wallets, research notes, personal computers, small digital cameras and personal dictation or recording machines may be taken into the reading room. Video cameras are not permitted in the Reading Room. For preservation reasons, the use of digital scanners is prohibited. The Archives of Ontario is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
3. Use of a digital camera in the Reading Room is permitted. Contact Reference Staff to review the policy on digital cameras.
4. As a courtesy to other researchers, please turn your cell phone to “vibrate” and take any calls outside of the Reading Room.
5. Eating and drinking are prohibited in the Reading Room. This includes chewing gum and candy. Smoking is prohibited throughout the building. Eating is permitted in the Customer Lounge at the tables provided. Smoking is permitted outside the building in the designated smoking area.
6. Archives of Ontario material **MUST NOT** be removed from the Reading Room. We reserve the right to inspect folders when you leave the Reading Room.

7. Records are delivered to researchers in the Reading Room upon submission of a request slip for each container/volume required. Only six containers or volumes will be supplied to a researcher at one time in the Reading Room. Please speak with Reading Room staff for more information.
8. The Archives of Ontario provides a range of copying services subject to copyright, donor agreements and the physical condition of the records. If you require reproductions please refer to Customer Service Guides No. 106 *How to Order Reproductions of Archival Records and Library Materials*, and No. 105 *Reproduction Service Fees* or speak with Reading rooms staff.

All researchers are responsible for refraining from discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment, offensive remarks or other actions that create intimidating or hostile conditions for other researchers or Archives staff.

Handling Archival Records

1. Before examining archival records, users should remove any dangling jewellery, identification cards, etc., which may come in contact with the record.
2. Do not apply hand lotion or cream prior to handling archival records. After eating, wash and thoroughly dry hands before working with archival records.
3. Only pencil may be used to take notes. The only exception is for Archives staff who may need to sign documents with pens.
4. Archival records should only be viewed on the research tables available in the Reading Room that provide clean, uncluttered surfaces with adequate note-taking space.
5. Please leave archival records flat on the table surface as much as possible. Avoid letting records overhang past the table's edge.
6. Use the white cotton gloves provided. These may be required when viewing some textual records and are required when viewing ALL non-textual records.
7. Always handle archival records with both hands to ensure the safety of the record. Only one archival record should be handled at a time. If records are kept in files, handle only one file at a time. Do not remove documents from folders. If you have a question about a document, ask Reading Room staff to come to your table; do not bring the document to the Reference Desk.
8. Handle records carefully and deliberately. Never flip archival records like magazine or newspaper pages. Move the records by sliding them from one pile to another. Replace them in the same way when you are finished, sliding them back into their original order.

9. It is imperative that you maintain the order of the archival records you are using. Do not change the order of the files within a container, or items within a file.
10. Do not write on archival records. Avoid placing your note-taking pad on top of records or leaning directly on archival records. Tracing maps or other records, or the use of “post-it” or other self-sticking notes, staples or paper clips on archival records is not permitted.
11. Avoid forcing volumes open to 180° so they lie flat. Preserve the binding of volumes by using Reading Room equipment such as weights, book cradles or book wedges. Reading Room staff will demonstrate the proper use of these aids.
12. Certain types of archival records, such as rolled items, blueprints and glass plate negatives, have special handling needs. Reading Room staff will offer guidance to researchers handling these records.

If you have any questions about handling archival material, staff would be happy to answer your questions or assist you in any way.

The Archives of Ontario reserves the right to cancel user privileges should any violation of the above regulations take place.

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