

# Massachusetts Archives Digital Repository Search Guide

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## Introduction

There are multiple ways to find records in the Massachusetts Archives Digital Repository. This guide explains how to navigate the site and recommends tips for locating materials. Links to guides for specific Series are included under the *Guides* section of our website.

In general, collections of records at the Massachusetts Archives follow a specific order of arrangement, which is also reflected in the Digital Repository: records are arranged first by Agency, or *Record Group*, then by *Series*, and finally by *Container* (box, folder, volume, digital folder, etc.). For example, the structure to the right shows how *Series 889X*, or water and sewer construction photographs created by the Metropolitan District Commission, is organized in the Archives.

When searching or browsing in the Digital Repository, it is important to keep this structure in mind because it represents the virtual location of materials. There are two methods for accessing records in the Digital Repository: Browsing and Searching.

## Browsing

Browsing allows you to explore records in the Digital Repository without using search terms. Click on the *Browse Archive* button at the upper left corner of any page to view our top-level collections (Record Groups).

Clicking on any of these Record Groups will open its contents, showing the sub-Record Groups and Series within. Using the example above, clicking on Browse Archive will take you to a page listing *Record EN: Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs* as one of our main collections. Clicking on Record Group EN will list its sub-Record Groups, which include *Record Group EN4.12: Metropolitan District Commission – Engineering Division*.

Clicking on Record Group EN4.12 will show you its Series, such as *Series 889X: Water and sewer construction photographs, 1928-1970*. From there, you can click on folders to view individual records and sort folder contents using *Facets* and *Filters*. Browsing is a good way to discover records in the Digital Repository and get a sense of our online materials.

## Searching

To search the Digital Repository, enter any terms or phrases into the search bar at the top of any page. This search bar queries all records in the Digital Repository. Results will be returned if a keyword matches text in a record's descriptive metadata and/or matches text in records of the following formats, which are full-text searchable:

HTML	.html
XML	.xml
Microsoft Office documents	.doc, .docx, .xls, etc.
OpenDocument format	.odf
PDF	.pdf
Rich Text Format	.rtf
Plain Text files	.txt
Mbox	.mbox

*Boolean* and *Wildcard* searches can also be used to limit searches, in addition to Facets and Filters (*see below*). A Boolean search utilizes certain words and symbols known as Boolean operators (*e.g., AND, OR*) alongside keywords to limit or expand search results.

The screenshot displays three record group entries, each with a thumbnail image of a folder and a title. The first entry is 'Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (Record Group EN)' with a subtitle 'Environmental Affairs, a cabinet level office wit...'. The second entry is 'Metropolitan District Commission – Engineering Division (Record Group EN4.12)' with a subtitle 'St 1947, c 583, which abolished the Metropolit...'. The third entry is 'Water and sewer construction photographs, 1928-1970.' with a subtitle 'Responsibility for operating a syst... 1928-1970'.

The screenshot shows the interface for a specific record. At the top, there are 'BROWSE ARCHIVE' and 'UP' buttons, a search bar, and 'ARCHIVE' and '+FILTER' buttons. The main heading is 'Metropolitan District Co...'. On the right side, there is metadata: 'Object Type: Folder', 'In Folder: Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (Record Group EN)'. At the bottom, there is a breadcrumb trail: 'Browse Archive > Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (Record Group EN) > Metropol...', a 'Sort by Title' dropdown menu, and icons for list, grid, and table views.

The screenshot shows search results for the query 'Boston AND Cambridge'. It features a 'BROWSE ARCHIVE' button, the search query in a box, and 'ARCHIVE' and '+FILTER' buttons. The main heading is '10641 total results'. At the bottom right, it says 'In complete archive' and includes a 'Sort by Relevance' dropdown menu and view icons.

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A Wildcard search uses special characters known as wildcards which can stand in for unknown characters in a text value. These are useful for locating multiple items with similar, but not identical, data. For example, typing *1#3* into the search bar will yield results containing the numbers *103*, *113*, and *123*. Alternatively, typing *b?ll* will display results containing *bell*, *bill*, *ball*, etc.

A second search bar appears on Collection, Series, and Folder pages above the list of record results. This search bar queries just the records within that particular collection, series, folder, etc. Returned results can be sorted by *Relevancy*, *Date*, and *Title* using the dropdown menu above the list of records.

### Facets & Filters

*Facets* are limiters which appear to the left of content in the repository. Selecting any values underneath these limiters will return only those records which contain the information selected. If no records are returned, then that means that the selected combination of limiters is not represented in any of the records.

For example, selecting *Massachusetts. Adjutant General's Office*, one of the possible options underneath the *Creator* facet, will return only those records that were created by the Adjutant General's Office. The options underneath each limiter are listed by frequency, with the most common options appearing at the top of the list.

*Filters* narrow keyword searches and are available through a dropdown menu next to the main search bar after an initial search has been made. Filters will not return any results if an initial search has not been made.

To limit your results using filters, input search terms into the search bar or conduct an empty search by clicking on the search bar without any terms entered. To use a filter, select the *+FILTER* button next to the main search bar at the top of the page, then select an option from the dropdown menu. Once an option is selected, input keywords into the *Matches* text bar and click *Add*. With the filter selected, the search will only return results where the keyword(s) entered appear in the specified filter field. For example, if the *Format* filter is selected, a keyword search of *pdf* will only return cards where *pdf* is specified in the Format field.

Filters also show up as links within the descriptive metadata attached to collections, folders, and items. Clicking on linked data is the same as searching that value using a filter.

Browse Archive > Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (Record Group EN) > Metrop... Sort by Title ▲ ☰ ☱ ☲ ☳

**Water and sewer constr...**  
Responsibility for operating a syst...

**Description:** Responsibility for op...  
**Digital Origin:** Only four contracts...  
**Date:** 1928-1970  
**Type of Resource:** Image  
**Format:** photographs  
**Extent:** Physical materials: 31 cubi...  
**Subject:** Aqueducts--Design and ...

**Subject:** Waterworks--Design an...  
**Subject:** Reservoirs--Design and ...  
**Subject:** Sewage disposal plants-...  
**Collection Information:** Part of Co...  
**Language:** en  
**Preferred Citation:** Water and sew...

**Rights Information**  
**Access Restrictions:** none  
**Terms of Use:** Those records cre...

**Record Identifiers**  
**Record Group:** EN4.12  
**Series:** 889X

Show more ▼

Search within FOLDER 🔍

REFINE YOUR SELECTION

**Creator**

Massachusetts. Registry of Vital Records and . . .

Massachusetts. Division of Inspection

FILTERS

Format: pdf ✓ ✗

**Subject:** School environment--Massachusetts

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