

Introduction to Archives

- What is an **archive**?
 - An archive is a **place or organization** which **preserves** documents and other materials of a specific group in archival collections. Many archives also serve as a **physical space** where people can **research and study** these documents. The term "archives" can also refer to a set of **collections** or an individual collection. The American Philosophical Society Library collects archival material on a variety of subjects, including the American Revolution, the founding of the United States, the study of natural history in the 18th and 19th centuries, and more.
- What is an **archival collection**?
 - An **archival collection** is a **group or set of items**, often referred to as **records**, related to a specific topic. This could include personal collections or organization collections. Personal collections include a person or family's diaries, letters, photographs, and more. Organization collections could represent materials from a company, school, government office, or other institution.
- What are **records**?
 - **Records** include **documents** and other objects that serve as **evidence** of the activities and interactions of people and organizations.
- What is an **archivist**?
 - **Archivists** are trained professionals who **preserve records** and make them available for use by the public.
- What is a **finding aid**?
 - A **finding aid** is a **guide** used in archives to describe the contents of an archival collection. It is called a finding aid because it *aids* researchers and archivists in *finding* materials within a collection.

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