



# CATALOG

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## Navigating the Catalog

Did you know the [National Archives Catalog](#) contains over **140 million pages of digitized historical records** and more than **27 million descriptions** of the records in our holdings? And new pages and descriptions are being added to the Catalog each week!



*Cat Stands the Dog Watch. Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. [National Archives Identifier 205583221](#)*

With so much information and material available to search, we are excited to share [updated Catalog Help pages](#) with new instructional videos to help you navigate the Catalog and make the most of your research online.

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# Using the National Archives Catalog

Our updated [Using the National Archives Catalog help pages](#) can help you learn more about the Catalog, including topics such as: How to Search; Refining a Search; Searching Within a Record Group, Series or File Unit; Using the Advanced Search; and much more. We know that people learn in different ways, so in addition to written instructions, we've included several new [how-to videos](#).

## What does the Catalog contain?

The Catalog currently contains archival descriptions of the National Archives' holdings, authority records, and millions of digitized and electronic records. Over 95% of the National Archives' holdings are described at the series level.

## How are records in the Catalog organized?

Records described in the Catalog are organized according to NARA's archival hierarchy, which is defined in the Lifecycle Data Requirements Guide (LCDRG) - NARA's standard for archival description.



Record groups and collections are the highest level of archival description. Record groups most often contain accessioned records from federal agencies. Collections are generally made up of non-federal records that were donated to NARA, usually from presidential administrations.

Beneath the record group or collection is the series. A series is a group of records that are related as the result of being created, received, or used in the course of the same activity. The series is the descriptive level that is connected to the archival creator - the person or organization who created and/or maintained the records.

Take a look and let us know what you think! Do you have ideas for further content or instructional videos? What else would you like to see covered in our Help pages? Let us know at [catalog@nara.gov](mailto:catalog@nara.gov)

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## Frequently Asked Questions about Searching the Catalog

***The Catalog description doesn't have an image; what do I do?***



While we have over 140 million digitized pages in the Catalog, this represents only a small percentage of the total holdings at the National Archives. Not all records have been digitized and made available in our Catalog, and some records have been described without digital images added. For questions about a particular description or to request a digitized copy, please contact the reference staff listed in the Contact(s) section of the description.

*Image: Coast Guard's Saltiest Spar, Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. [National Archives Identifier 205583239](#)*

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### ***Do I need a Catalog account to search the Catalog?***

You do not need a [Catalog Account](#) to search the Catalog. You will need an account if you want to save lists of your searches or a bulk download of descriptions. Of course you'll need an account to [join us as a Citizen Archivist](#) to contribute tags, transcriptions, and comments to the Catalog.



*Image: SPAR Anita Jones. Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. [National Archives Identifier 205582537](#)*

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### ***Can I search for records without transcriptions so I can find records to transcribe?***

The quickest way to tell if a record has been transcribed is to open up the individual record and look at the thumbnail pages beneath the viewer. If you see a blue tag on the thumbnail image, that means there is a contribution on that page. If the record has multiple pages, each page with a contribution will have a blue tag. Look for a page without

this tag. But just because a page has a blue tag does not mean the transcription is complete; you can always open up the page to see if the transcription is complete or needs revision.

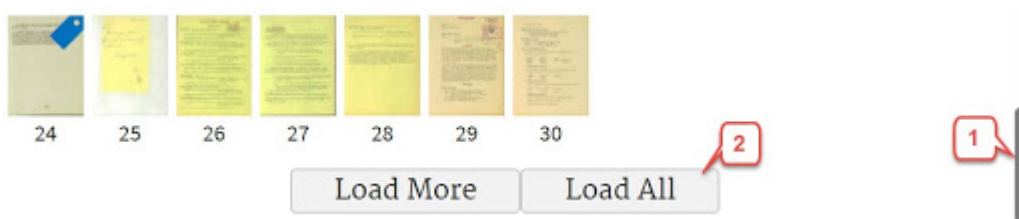


*Image: Coast Guard Signalman Sends a Wig-wag Message by Semaphore Flags, Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. [National Archives Identifier 205577174](#)*

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You may also have to load all the pages of a record to find a page that hasn't been transcribed. Here's how you do it:

1. Slide the bar in the thumbnail section all the way down
2. Click "Load All" to see all pages available



If you are working on records found in our [Citizen Archivist Missions](#), we suggest you skip 10,15, 20 or more pages in the list or navigate to the end of the list of records and work backwards. Often people work on records from the first to the last, you may find more records that haven't been worked on by starting at the end.

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## Additional Catalog Resources

## Record Group Explorer and the Presidential Library Explorer

Looking for a more visual way to browse the Catalog? Try our [Record Group Explorer](#) and [Presidential Library Explorer](#)! These next generation finding aids allow you to browse NARA's holdings by Record Group, and by the holdings of NARA's Presidential Libraries. You can use it to get a sense of the scale and organization of records at the National Archives and to explore what is available online through the National Archives Catalog.

### Record Group 15 - Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs



#### Number of Textual Scans online

The progress bar provides an estimate of the percentage of textual pages in this Record Group that are available online. Some Record Groups contain only one format while others include multiple formats.



#### Browse Our Records

Three record preview cards are shown. The first card, 'Textual Records', shows a snippet of handwritten text. The second card, 'Photographs', shows a black and white aerial photograph of a city. The third card, 'Electronic Records', shows a snippet of a digital document with a table of data. Each card has a blue 'Explore' button at the bottom.

Searching for something in the Catalog? Check out our [Search Strategies newsletter](#) for tips on how to refine and filter your searches.

For our Citizen Archivist contributors, we also encourage you to view our [Citizen Archivist Resources](#) page for helpful information, tips and tricks, instructional videos and more.

Interested in genealogy? Check out our [2021 Genealogy Series workshops](#). You can watch on-demand video recordings and view presentation materials from our recent series of workshops offering family history research tools on federal records for all skill levels.



Image: Maritime Service Enrollees Learning the Use of a Compass, 4/24/1942. Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. [National Archives Identifier 205582415](#)

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## Start your research on History Hub



Have a question? Find your answer on [History Hub!](#)

Free and open to anyone, you can ask questions and get answers from multiple sources including National Archives staff, other archives, libraries, museums, and a community of genealogists, history enthusiasts, and citizen experts like you.



***How do I get started as a Citizen Archivist?  
Is there a guide or manual?***



***How can I track my time spent volunteering  
as a Citizen Archivist?***



***What kinds of activities and tasks are  
performed by Citizen Archivists?***

See our [recent newsletter for more details, information, and instructions](#) about using History Hub for your research.

Make [History Hub](#) your first stop! You can ask—or answer—questions on History Hub, or see if your question has already been answered.



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### **COVID-19 Update**

The National Archives is committed to the health and safety of our visitors and staff. We are closely monitoring the situation regarding COVID-19, and we are working with public health officials and our counterpart agencies to monitor and respond to the evolving conditions and following CDC guidelines.

For more information, visit <https://www.archives.gov/coronavirus>

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Questions or comments? Email us at [catalog@nara.gov](mailto:catalog@nara.gov).



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