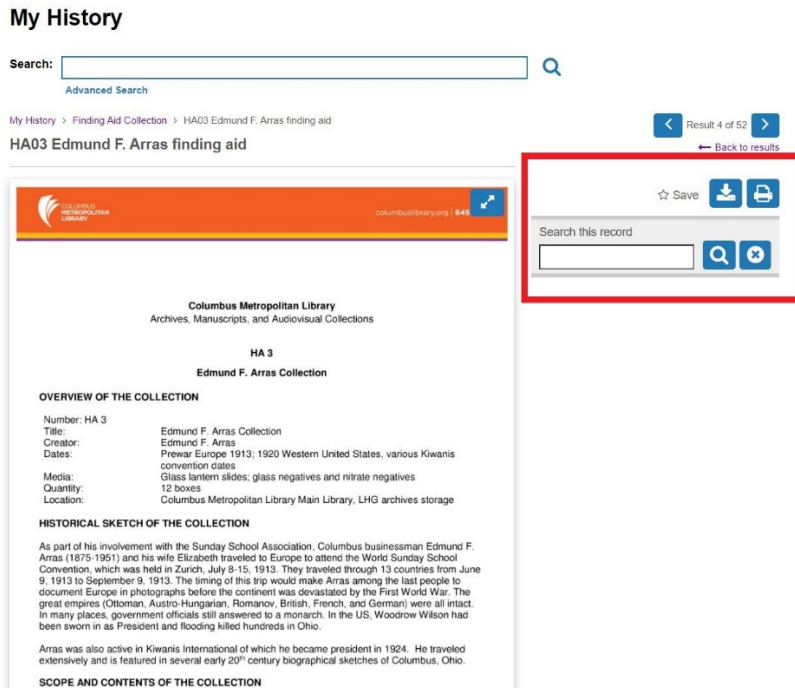# Finding Aids for Archives Collections

Columbus Metropolitan Library has over 100 archival collections, which consist of original materials, such as photographs, documents, letters, video or audio files. Unlike a book where there is one catalog record per item, there may be thousands of items in an archives collection. Collections are given a name and number, such as "HA 1 Columbus Links Collection" to identify the main topic of the collection and the order in which it was received. Box, folder and item numbers are then used to identify individual items. To request the first item in the HA 1 collection, you would ask for: HA 1 Columbus Links Collection, Box 1, Folder 1, and Item 1.

Archivists create finding aids to help you learn about the collection and decide if you want to view it. Finding aids describe the contents of an archival collection and provide context for the materials. The finding aid will give you information about the scope and contents of the collection, its history and how it is organized. Important information about copyright and how to cite the materials is also included in the finding aid. At the Columbus Metropolitan Library, an inventory of the collection is part of the finding aid. You can use the inventory to determine which boxes you would like to view when you come to the library.

Finding aids for all of the Columbus Metropolitan Library's archives collections are online. Once you have searched and found a collection you are interested in, you can use the tools on the upper right to search within the finding aid or download it to view the entire document.


When you find an item in a finding aid that you would like to view, note the collection number, box and item. Library staff will page the item for you in person or you can contact us at history@columbuslibrary.org for more information.