

# WHAT IS A FINDING AID?

## How to find, read, and search one!



### 1. WHAT IS A FINDING AID?

Finding aid is an archival term for the guide or inventory of the contents of an archival collection.

Finding aids are created by archivists to give researchers a description of the items in the collection and where to locate an item within the collection. So it is an aid to finding information/materials hence the term finding aid.



### 2. BUT WHAT IS A COLLECTION?

collection - n. ~ 1. A group of materials with some unifying characteristic.

In archival terms this refers to a set of items that may have belonged to a certain person, family, organization, or company. A collection can contain a variety of items that cover many media.

#### 2B. OKAY, BUT WHAT IS IN A COLLECTION?

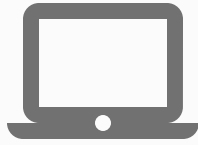
Anything, everything, but they typically include:

**Personal collections** can be of a singular person or of families. And traditionally include letters, photographs, their personal works such as writings, poetry, or videos, or music, materials relating to hobbies or organization involvement, and items of personal importance which can be 3D objects.

Collections can also be from **organizations, corporations, and governmental bodies** like cities or federal agencies. These collection typically include correspondence, ledgers and account books, reports, research, and other items created in the course of business.

Archivists keep items together in collections for the purpose of context and to best represent the collective whole or narrative of the person or organization, at least for what has been kept or saved over time.

# HOW DO I FIND A FINDING AID?




## 1. ON OUR WEBSITE

WWW.BATES.EDU/ARCHIVES/

The search box on the main page gives you two ways to search.



- 1 Enter a name, topic, or any term into the search box and click the  button and a list of finding aids will appear.

Click the title and you will be brought to the finding aid!




[Guide to the Daisy Dill Norton papers, 1893-1955, n.d. MC057](http://abacus.bates.edu/muskie-archives/EADFindingAids/MC057)  
[abacus.bates.edu/muskie-archives/EADFindingAids/MC057.html](http://abacus.bates.edu/muskie-archives/EADFindingAids/MC057.html)

Repository: Edmund S. Muskie Archives and Special Collections Library; Creator: Norton, Daisy Dill, 1872-1959; Title: Daisy Dill Norton papers; ID: MC057; Date: 1893-1955, undated; Extent: 8.5 Linear feet; Language: English; Abstract: The collection contains correspondence, photographs, diaries, and scrapbooks that ...

- 2 The link below the search box will allow you to view a list of our collections. Click "view full description" to be brought to the finding aid for that particular collection.

### A short history of China, ca. 1961

- **Creator:** Lee, Shao Chang, 1891-1977
- **Collection ID:** MC016
- **Abstract:** A presumably unpublished history of China written by Shao Chang Lee (1891-1977), a noted authority on Chinese history and religion who taught at Bates College as a visiting professor.
- [View Full Description](#)  **CLICK**

## 2. THROUGH THE CBB LIBRARY CATALOG

When searching CBBCat if you come across an entry with an archives icon and it is a collection (and not a book), there will be a link to the finding aid.

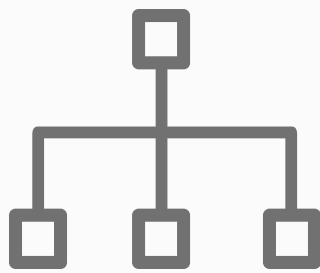
Author	Norton, Daisy Dill, 1872-1959		
Title	Daisy Dill Norton papers, 1893-1955, undated		
Location	Call No.	Status	
Bates Archives/Special Collections	MC057	Library use only	

[Send via Email](#)

GOT THERE. NOW WHAT?

# WHAT AM I LOOKING AT?

## HOW TO READ A FINDING AID



### 1. FIRST SOME HELPFUL INFORMATION ON HOW A FINDING AID IS STRUCTURED.

Collections, especially large collections, are divided into sections of like items or related material. Archivists call these groupings "series." Within a series the material is organized too, usually alphabetically or chronologically. The structure is hierarchical and designed to help you identify the materials that you want within a large grouping of material without describing thousands of individual items.

### LET'S BREAK THIS DOWN A BIT.

#### Collection level info at the top:

Information that is pertinent to the whole collection and explains how the collection is organized.

#### Series are:


Groups of like materials typically organized alphabetically or chronologically.

If a group is arranged by subject, you may need to look across multiple subjects to get all the info for a specific time frame. Also subjects can be found across series if in a different media format. For example letters and photos from the same time frame and on the same subject can be in two different series.

#### Series number & name

List of items and/or folders

Folder titles will help you narrow where in a series the info you want is located and give you an idea of what the contents of the folder pertain to.

- 
- [Redacted] • Collection name
  - [Redacted] • Collection ID #
  - [Redacted] • Abstract
  - [Redacted] • Biography note (if a personal collection)
  - [Redacted] • Historical note (if an org., corp., or gov. body)
  - [Redacted] • Notes on how the collection is arranged

#### Series 1 - Correspondence:

- [Redacted] Letters from
- [Redacted] Letters to

#### Series 2 - Photographs:

- [Redacted] Pleasant Park
- [Redacted] Rowe family

#### Series 3 - Writings:

- [Redacted] Draft of chapter 1
- [Redacted] Poems

# HOW TO SEARCH WITHIN A FINDING AID AND WHAT INFO YOU NEED TO REQUEST COLLECTIONS.

## 2. HOW DO I SEARCH THE FINDING AID?

Now that you are at the finding aid, you have some options on how to search within it.

- 1 First option, you can scroll down and read through the finding aid.



**Collection info**

TABLE OF CONTENTS	
Summary Information	
Historical Note	
Scope and Content Note	
Organization and Arrangement	
Administrative Information	
Related Materials	
Controlled Access Headings	
Collection Inventory	
Correspondence	
Photographs	
Diaries	
Scrapbooks	

**Note:** 98% of the time a side navigation bar will be on the left and you can click on any of the titles and it will bring you to that section. Also note the hierarchy in the structure of the table.

**Series**

- 2 Or you can hit the Ctrl button + F and search using whatever term you used in your search to get to the finding aid. This will lead you right to the info you are looking for.



## HOW DO I REQUEST AND VIEW THE MATERIALS I SEE IN THE FINDING AID?

### 1. COLLECT SOME INFO.

When you have identified the material you are interested in, please take note of these pieces of collection information:

- Collection name and ID #
- Series # and/or name
- Box #s or other item level identifier listed

If you have questions or are unsure you have all the info, stop on in or email us, we can help you!

### 2. COME ON OVER TO THE ARCHIVES!

Armed with the collection information or just a question, come on over and we will retrieve the items for you to look at.

PLEASE NOTE:

HAVE QUESTIONS? EMAIL US AT MUSKIE@BATES.EDU OR MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR A ONE-ON-ONE ARCHIVES ORIENTATION HERE:

OUR OPEN HOURS: M-F 8:30AM TO NOON & 1PM TO 5PM

& NONE OF OUR ITEMS CAN BE CHECKED OUT.