

PREPARING FOR RESEARCH AT THE STATE ARCHIVES

Most students outside the Pierre area will have limited research time at the State Archives. The following will help you prepare so you can make the most of your time and our resources.

Before Coming to the Archives

1. Have a preliminary idea of what you would like to research. In some areas of study, our collections are so vast that having a more focused idea of your topic will allow you to save time in your search for primary source materials. Here are some examples of ways to narrow your topic:

Example 1

What is your interest?	Aviation
Develop a general idea	South Dakota pilots
Narrow down to a part of the theme	South Dakota women in aviation
Focus on a specific person/event to illustrate your idea	Nellie Zabel Willhite (South Dakotan and first deaf person to earn a pilot's license)

Example 2

What is your interest?	Agriculture, Ranching
Develop a general idea	Impacts of the Dust Bowl
Narrow down to a part of the theme	Inventions or techniques resulting from the need to conserve resources
Focus on a specific event to illustrate your idea	Use of windbreaks, strip cropping, and no-till farming

Example 3

What is your interest?	Medicine
Develop a general idea	Comparing health practices
Narrow down to a part of the theme	The spread of tuberculosis, cholera, or the influenza epidemics
Focus on a specific event to illustrate your idea	Development of vaccines and sanitation practices

2. Check out the State Archives collections that have been digitized and are available online!
 - a. [South Dakota Digital Archives](#) - includes thousands of historical photographs, maps, audio recordings, and documents from the State Archives collections.
 - b. [Chronicling America](#) - searchable newspapers from across the U.S., including a selection of South Dakota and Dakota Territory newspapers from before 1922.
3. Put together a list of collections on your topic that have not been digitized that you would like to view. Your teacher and State Archives staff can help you put together this list. You will want to search:
 - a. [ArchivesSpace](#) (the State Archives' online collections catalog)
 - b. [State Archives Library Catalog](#)

c. [Other collection guides and indexes on our website](#)

Be sure to record the title of the book or collection, any accession numbers, and the location information given (library call numbers, box numbers, microfilm roll numbers, etc.). Knowing what collections are available may help you narrow your research topic.

4. Make a research appointment by calling (605-773-3804) or emailing (StateArchives@state.sd.us) our reference desk. Archives staff will ask for your list of collections, so have it handy! They may also recommend other materials based on your topic. If your teacher is planning a group trip to the Archives, they may handle this for you.

During Your Visit to the Archives

1. Bring your notes or outlines with you! You don't want to rely only on memory.
2. Keep track of the collections you view, and where you find information and resources, particularly collection names, numbers, and location information. You'll need this information for your citations later.
3. Archival materials are often unique, irreplaceable, and fragile. Please handle all items with care and follow any special instructions given to you by staff.
4. Don't be afraid to ask questions! Archives staff will be happy to help.