

RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO THE UCA ARCHIVES

Researchers' Guide to the Archives

–Author: Shelbea Gentry, updated 08.23.2024

Visiting an archive may feel daunting, nerve-racking with all of the finding aids (what *is* a finding aid?), seemingly endless collections, and slightly different rules from the rest of the library; luckily it isn't. Follow this guide to maximize the most out of your Archives visit, and squash those nerves.

1. Visit the website

This may sound like a no-brainer, but many new patrons forget this basic (and we argue a highly important) step. The [UCA Archives website](#) is where you will find the holdings of the entire archives, aside from our book collection (more about that in a bit).

The homepage is where researchers will find key information like:



Hours of operation for the Archives are [Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.](#) Please note that hours may be subject to change.

Currently the Archives is by appointment only. [Reference Appointments](#) should be scheduled first for patrons who are unsure of what material to view for research. *Note: archival material will not be available during this type of appointment.*

[Research Appointments](#) should be scheduled after the Reference Appointment, or if the patron has narrowed down what archival material they wish to view. When scheduling the Research Appointment, please include: [Series, Subseries \(if it has one\), Box Number, and File or Item Number.](#) ← This is one of the most important parts of the request process, so please include this information. *Remember, more information is better than less information.* This truly is a “help us help you” situation.

The [Research Assistance](#) section provides our main hub for research needs, including [Ask the Archives](#). Ask the Archives is a quick way of asking archives related questions. All questions will be answered by an Archives staff member. Also included within this section is the [Manuscript Collections Resource Guide](#), which breaks down the 350+ collections by topics and includes appendices with information about different types of material found within manuscript collections.

Pro tip: check out the footnotes for additional information.

Also of note, the [FAQ section](#) contains documents including the Archives' [reading room policies & procedures](#), the amount of collection holdings available for viewing per visit, and other frequently asked questions.

Hover over the About Us tab and select [Faculty & Staff](#) to see who may assist you with your research needs, blog entries, and a link to the Torreyson Library page.

Clicking the [About Us](#) tab takes researchers to the general information page.

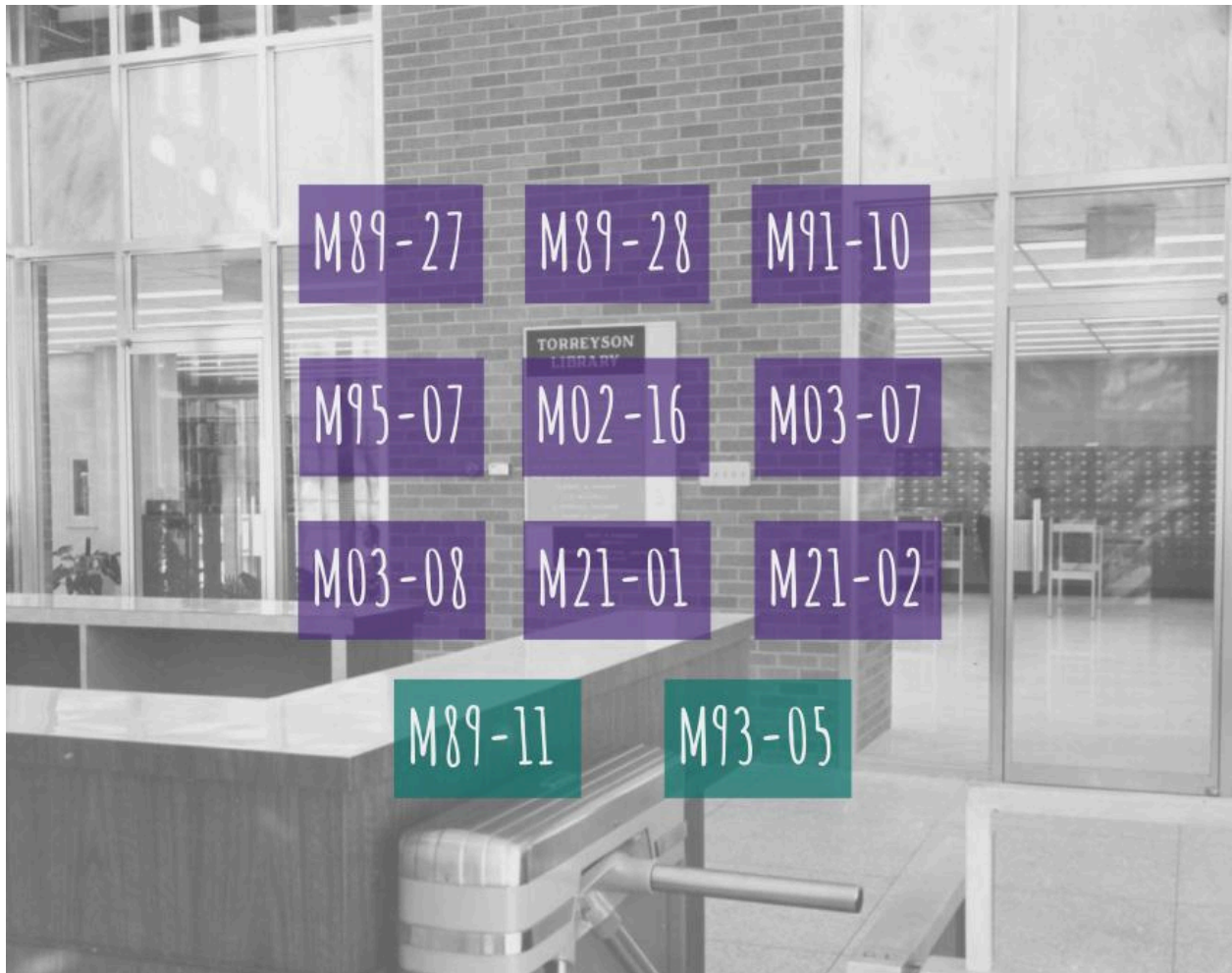
Mailing address and telephone number, location within the library, and appointments and Ask the Archives links are located there as well. The top right portion of the page also has links to the Archives social media accounts (check us out!).

[Blog entries](#) are where members of the Archives staff researched and compiled mini essays about specific collection holdings, typically people or events of special significance. [Blog entries](#) may include photographs of the collection holdings, or even digital scans of the originals.

2. Narrow your research topic

The best way for the Archives to help find crucial primary sources is to come with your research topic narrowed. For example, if a researcher visits the Archives with a broad topic such as “women’s history” most of the first visit would be spent narrowing down that topic to something more manageable.

Based on the broad topic of women's history, a researcher could choose to narrow the focus to "women in libraries in Central Arkansas colleges and universities." Collections the Archives has which would provide some primary source material include:

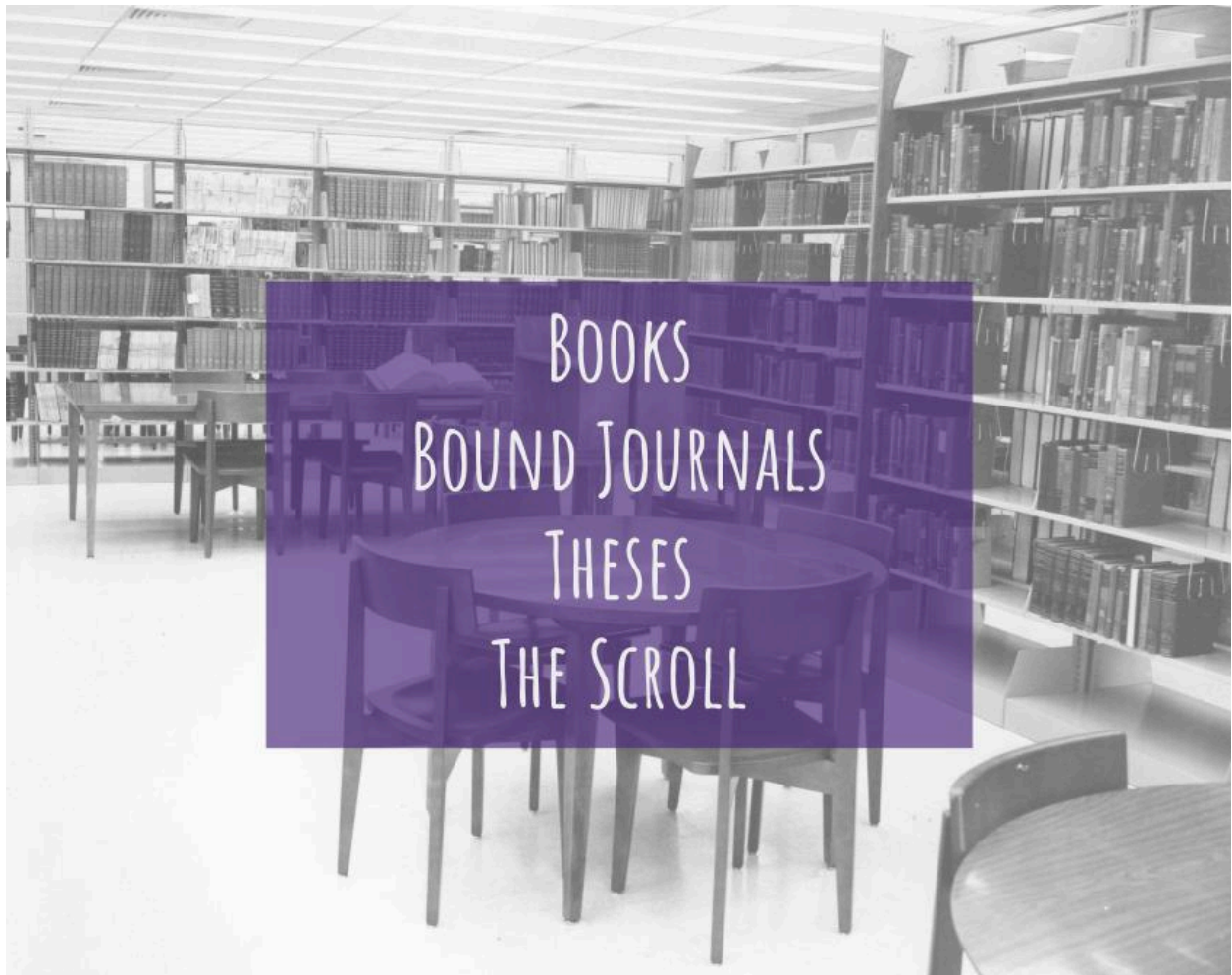


The results from the search (ctrl + f) "library" on the Manuscript Collections page included all but M21-01 and M21-02. The search (ctrl + f) "librarian" included M20-01 and M21-02. Did you miss anything? In this instance one additional search (ctrl + f) "libraries" catches what the previous searches missed—M89-11 and M93-05. No search is perfect, but completing searches on all forms of a noun/subject can capture a more complete list of what the Archives contains. Eleven collections is more manageable; however, narrowing the topic further can reduce the amount of collections requested, and keep your focus on track. An example of this could be, "UCA librarians (women) who participated in professional organizations." This further reduces the collections to view. *This is a great example of how an Archives Reference Appointment is conducted.*

3. Bound Collection

You find the title of the book you need for your research. You complete a search using the [UCA Library's search tool](#), and you find that the book says *location in Archives*. No...seriously? Yes! The UCA Archives has a collection of books, bound journals, theses, and The Scroll.

(Physical copies of UCA publications can be found in the Archives!)



Patrons may contact the Archives to schedule a visit where the book (or other bound material) may be viewed. *All books, bound journals, and theses must stay in the Archives.*

Pro tip: if there are multiple catalog entries, check the location; sometimes there is a copy in the main collection which may be checked-out. For journals search databases such as JSTOR, for an online version of the article which can be accessed with your UCA credentials (on-campus).

A frequently requested example of this is The Arkansas Historical Quarterly.

4. During your visit

Though the UCA Torreyson Library allows food and drink, *the UCA Archives prohibits food or drink*. Archival material cannot be easily (if at all) replaced, so please remember this while visiting to help us preserve our holdings. For items such as photographs, the Archives will provide gloves to wear while handling the material. To digitize please see a staff member for assistance with the copy machine or regarding enhanced scans (600dpi) and to review copyright permissions. Researchers are also limited to pencil for note-taking to protect archival material. For the full list of Reading Room Policies, see the [Reading Room Policies Form](#).

5. After your visit

More often than not, patrons will need to schedule additional visits to the Archives. This is normal! The most common reason for multiple visits is the size/volume of the collection material. *Scheduling your visit(s) sooner rather than later will allow you to browse the maximum amount of material for your paper or project.*

