Finding and requesting archive items

Searching the catalogue

The archive catalogue offers various search options. These can be combined, as below, looking for manuscripts dating from 1400-1550:

This search was carried out using the default setting, in which the system looks for a record that matches both search criteria when two (or more) fields have been used. Choosing the Or option under Field Options at the bottom of the screen enables you to find all records that satisfy any one of the search criteria suggested.

You will also see at the bottom of the screen, under Word options, that it is possible to choose whether, when you input two or more words into a text search, you are looking for that precise phrase (choose Phrase), or a record that contains all those words but not necessarily together (choose And), or records that contain any of those words (choose Or).

For some searches, most notably Subject, it is possible to check for approved terms before carrying out a search. If you click on the blue text at the side of the search box, it will open a look-up box in which you can search to see if the term you wish to use is one that the database uses. (Note: the subject terms used in the archive database are the same as those in the book catalogue, a combination of MeSH and Library of Congress.)

- When you have a subject in the box on which you want to search, click Term and it will be entered into your search form. If it has referred you to another word as the authorised term, you will see this indicated with USE next to it: click on USE to bring up the entry for the authorised wording then click on Term to enter this to your search form.
- If you are specifying a particular level of the catalogue at which to search (eg Collection or Item), click on Level in the search form to see the options, then click on Use to make your chosen level appear in the search form.

Once you have pressed search, the system will deliver a hitlist to you in the following form:

You can choose in which order results are displayed – reference, date, etc. – by clicking on the blue text at the head of the column on which you wish to sort the data.

Once you have carried out a search, you can refine it. Click on the "search again" text and you will return to the search interface. **The system will remember your first search and will not lose the hitlist.** You will see some new search buttons:

- "Widen" allows you to carry out a second search and add the results to your first hitlist;
- "Narrow" allows you to carry out a second search and include in your hitlist only those items that satisfy both searches;
- "Exclude" allows you to carry out a second search and to drop from the original hitlist any items meeting the second search criteria.

Thus in the example above, entering "recipes" and pressing Widen adds all recipes of any date to the existing list; Narrow restricts it to material of that date that has recipes as a subject; and Exclude removes all recipes from the initial hitlist.

To carry out a new search, simply enter the new search terms and press Search; the original hitlist will be lost.

Displaying results

When you have a hitlist on screen, click on the blue number at the left of any entry to see a detailed catalogue description.

For material that forms part of a larger collection, you can see the data in context by clicking on the "Click to browse" link below the reference; this arranges the data into a "tree" that illustrates the collection's structure visually.

You can expand the various levels of the tree and navigate around it to explore the collection. Each level in the tree corresponds to a slash (/) in an item's reference. An X by the side of a part of the tree means that it is already expanded; a sheet of paper means that you are at the bottom of the tree and cannot expand further; and a sheet of paper with its corner turned over means that there are more levels to be expanded (click on the piece of paper to expand them. So, in the example below, drawn from the Crick papers (PP/CRI: the first slash is not displayed on the screen):

- the top level and the one below have been expanded;
- the third line down (PP/CRI/A/1) can be expanded further; and
- the fifth line down (PP/CRI/A/2/1) is the bottom of that particular branch of the tree. This will usually be the Item level, from which online ordering can be carried out.

To see the detailed description of any of these levels you would just click on the blue number to the side of the brief description.
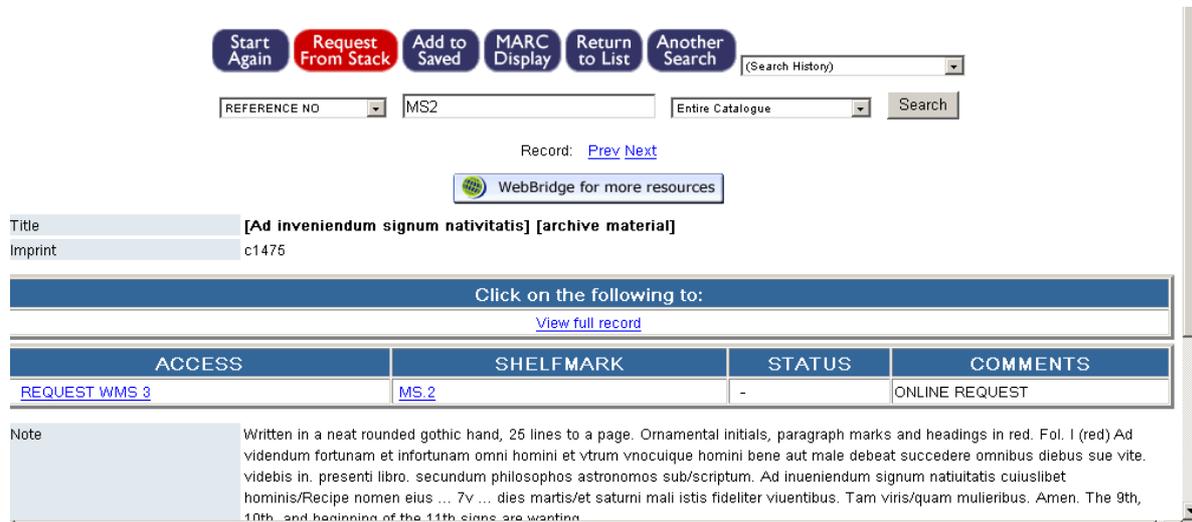
Navigate up or down the tree to reach the Item level: from here you can click on the relevant link to request the item for consultation in the Library. Use the Back button of your browser to return to the archive catalogue.

Requesting material

Archive material is requested in the same way as the library's published holdings. When you have found the item that you want, click on the "Request for use in the Library" link to request it; this will take you to a corresponding brief record within the main Library books database (example below).

Click the red Request from Stack button and on the resulting screen enter your card number and PIN as if you were requesting a book, then use the Back button of your browser to return to the archive catalogue (do not use Start Again as this will take you to the front screen of the books catalogue).

If you have never carried out an online request before, enter your card number, leave the PIN box blank and press Submit: you will arrive at a screen that enables you to choose your own PIN or password. Speak to a member of Library staff if you have any difficulty carrying out your first order.

Material is requested at the Item level: that is, the individual file or volume. You may have to navigate up or down the "tree" of an archive collection to get to this level. Item is usually at the very bottom level of a tree but there are sometime Piece level descriptions below this (this is particularly likely when dealing with manuscript items, reference MS.). The Level of a record is displayed on the "tree" display and also in the detailed description of the material.

You can use the Level box on the search form, in combination with other search concepts, to create a hitlist of all Item level records (ie, the ones that can be ordered online). For example, putting Item in the Level box and PP/CRI in the Reference box will deliver a hitlist of item level records in the Crick papers: a list of material that can all be ordered online.

If an item is Closed – for example, under the Data Protection Act – no red Request from Stack button will appear.

In some cases, clicking on the link to request the Item will fail to connect with a corresponding record in the books database:

- If you are presented with a list of options, click on the top one; this will usually be the record for the archive item. (This is a result of the two databases interpreting the slashes in archive references in different ways.)
- If none of the options are the right item, this will generally mean that this collection has not yet had its data loaded into the books database: there is a time-lag between cataloguing and the availability of online ordering.

In some cases only the top, collection-level description of papers has been converted so far. If this is the case, searching on that collection's reference will give a hit-list of one record, and choosing the "Click to Browse" option will not make a tree open up. If this is the case, use the hard-copy catalogue in the Poynter Room to find out more about this collection – consult the Archives and Manuscripts department if you need help.

If the material you want is not yet included on the computer catalogue – either because the collection has not yet been converted in full, or because online ordering is not yet enabled - request it using one of the Library's green order slips. You will need its detailed reference and also its box number, if one is recorded. Ask a staff member for help if you are not sure how to fill in the slip.

If you have not yet visited the Library and been issued with a card, contact the Archives and Manuscripts department at arch+mss@wellcome.ac.uk (telephone +44 (0)20 7611 8899). Likewise, contact the department if you need any other help ordering material.