

SCDAH Online Records Index

What is the ORI?

The online portal to a portion of the SCDAH's records, indexed to increase accessibility

What can I find in the ORI?

Index information for 300,000+ records, and images for over 125,000

How can I search the ORI?

- By Name
- By Place
- By Series
- By Topic
- By Date
- By Keyword

ORI Research Tips

- 1) The drop-down box will only display relevant search results
- 2) There are several options for sorting and customizing searches
- 3) Searches can be narrowed based on the availability of images
- 4) Images can be downloaded or printed from the ORI
- 5) Records without images can be ordered or viewed in person at the SCDAH

www.archivesindex.sc.gov

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WHAT IS THE ONLINE RECORDS INDEX?

The South Carolina Department of Archives and History holds millions of records documenting the history of the state and its people. Each year, tens of thousands of people access records either in person at the Archives, through remote research requests, or on the internet via the [SC Electronic Records Archives](#) and the Online Records Index (ORI).

The ORI is the SCDAH's online portal to a portion of our most accessed records such as plats, wills, and legislative papers (among many others). In order to increase access to these and many other records, archivists at the SCDAH began indexing selected series in the 1970s. For most series, indexing meant creating a list of names, place names, dates, and topics. Originally, these records were accessed via microfilm indexes in the SCDAH Research Room. Today, they are accessible online on the ORI!

Since the early 2000s, the SCDAH has digitized records and paired the images with the original indexes. As of Spring 2020, over 308,000 records are indexed and over 125,000 of those records have images that can be viewed (and downloaded!) via the internet. In this guide, we will cover the types of records available, how to search them, and how to request access to indexed records that are not available in digital format.

To navigate to the ORI, simply go to www.archivesindex.sc.gov. Once you have arrived, we recommend clicking "Just take me to the search page," which brings up a number of search options we will cover here.

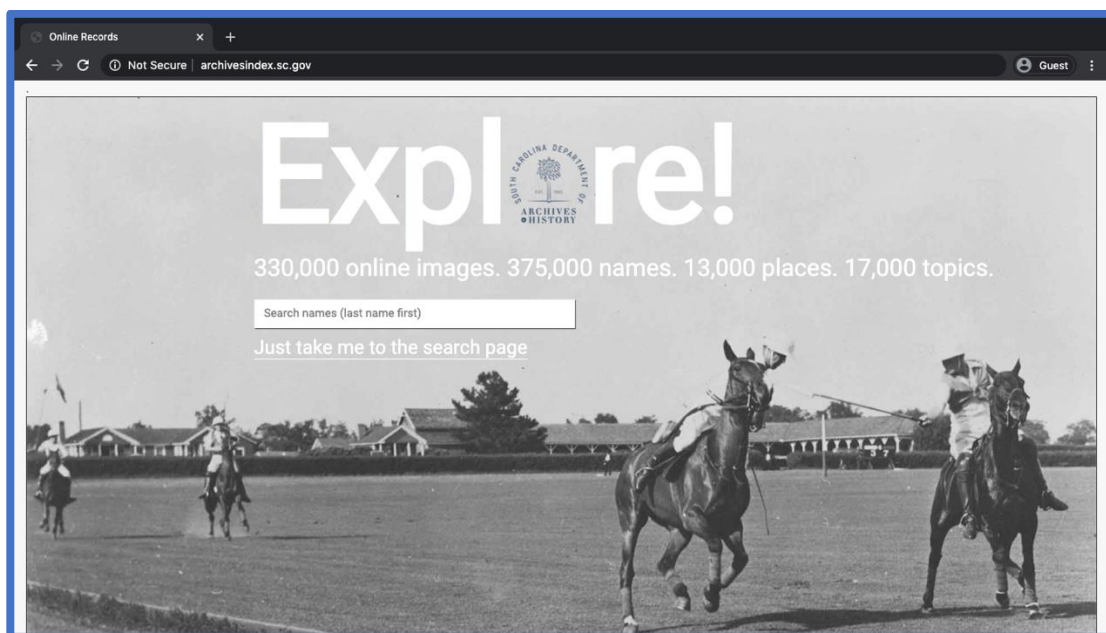


Figure 1

WHAT CAN I FIND IN THE ORI?

A wide variety of the SCDAH's archival records are indexed in the ORI. From wills to committee reports, from school photographs to plats, the ORI has records that appeal to researchers from all backgrounds.

It is important to note that although the ORI contains over 308,000 records with indexing information and over 125,000 images, it is by no means *all* of what the SCDAH has to offer. The SCDAH's collections contain millions of records outside of those indexed and digitized here in the ORI. To access records not currently indexed in the ORI, consult the [guide for how to search the Archives Catalog and Summary Guide](#).

Consult the [Series Description List](#) to see series indexed in the ORI.

HOW DO I SEARCH THE ORI?

There are several ways users can search for records in the Online Records Index. Usually, the method you'll use to search depends on what type of research you are conducting. For example, genealogical researchers searching for a specific ancestor will almost always benefit most from *searching by name*. Historical or legal researchers may also benefit from name searches but might be better off *searching by series, record group, or topic*. It is also possible, and often helpful, to use multiple search terms to help narrow the scope of a search. Keep in mind that any and all of the methods discussed below can be combined to help refine your search! In this guide, we hope to illuminate the possibilities of searching on the ORI.

RESEARCH TIP #1: DROP-DOWN BOX

When searching in any field on the ORI, once you start typing, a drop-down box will appear with available options to complete your search. If “No Data Found” appears in the drop-down box, it means there are no records indexed in the ORI that have entries for that name/place/topic/etc.

For example, when I begin typing my maternal great grandmother’s surname, Rumph, the drop-down box comes up with a number of possibilities (Figure 2-B). When I continue to type, I learn that there are no Rumphs indexed whose first names begin with E (Figure 2-A):

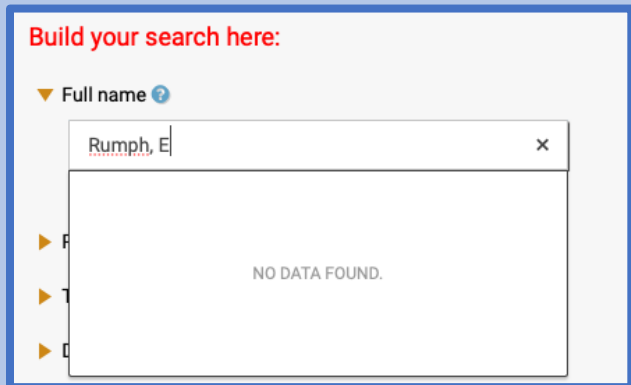


Figure 2-A

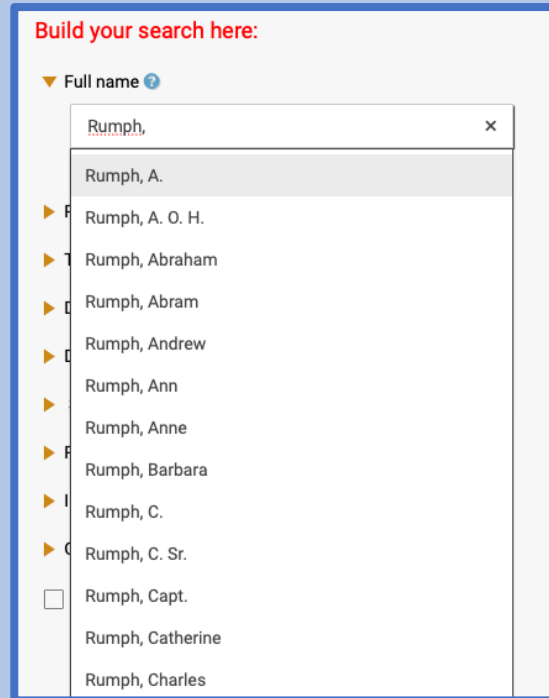


Figure 2-B

This rule also applies when combining searches with multiple search terms. The drop-down boxes for each category will only include terms that actually appear together in an indexed record. The purpose of this is to never allow a searcher to complete an “Empty” search, or one that produces no results. For example, if there are no records that mention David Rumph *and* Columbia, Columbia will not appear as an option in the drop-down box (Figure 3). If “NO DATA FOUND” appears in the drop-down box, it means there are no records indexed with this combination of terms!

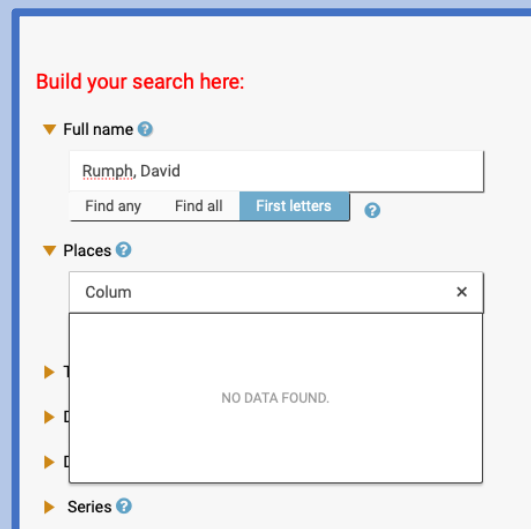


Figure 3

SEARCH METHOD #1: BY NAME

The most common way to search the ORI is to enter a person's name into the "Full Name" box. Always enter names in this format: "Last Name, First Name." Names of enslaved people are always indexed as "Name (Slave)." Free Persons of Color, when identified as such in the record, are indexed as "Name (Free Person of Color)." You can use the search box to enter as many names as you'd like at a time, or search for a single name.

It is also important to note that until *very recently*, spelling was not standardized! Your ancestors' names may appear in any number of variant spellings. Remember that alternate spellings may need to be searched as well as the common, modern spelling of a name.

Underneath the "Full Name" search box, there are three options. "Find Any" is the default setting, and it finds records that contain *any* of the names you enter. For example, if you enter "Smith, John" and "Cuba (Slave)," the ORI will find all records with *either* person's name associated with it. In this example, the ORI found 1,059 records (Figure 4).

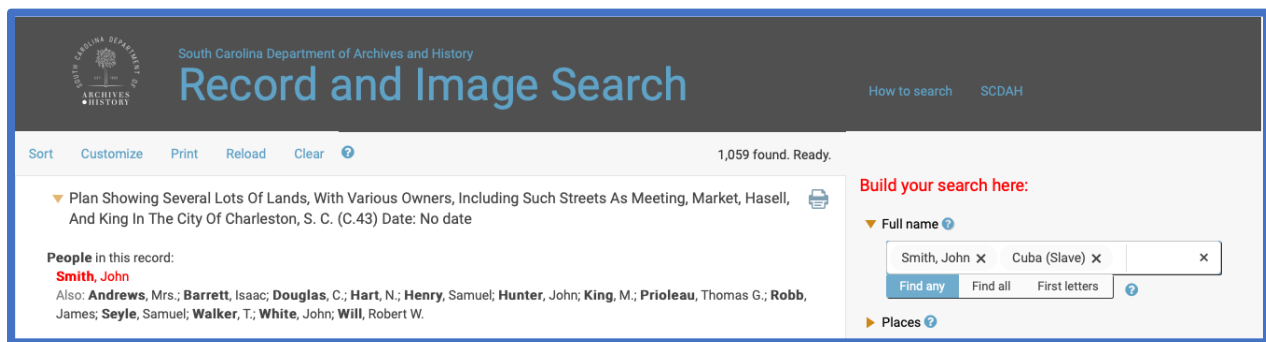


Figure 4

However, when you search both names using the "Find all" option, the ORI will only display records that include *all* names entered. When using the above example of John Smith and Cuba (Slave), the ORI produces 1 record with both names indexed (Figure 5).

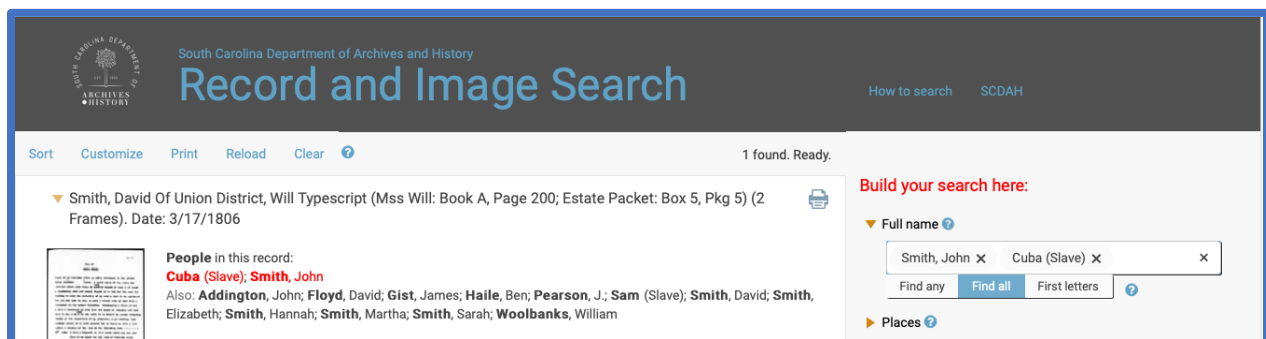


Figure 5

Finally, the “First letters” option allows users to begin typing a name and find all names that begin with what they have entered. This option can be particularly useful for names with multiple spellings or endings, or when a researcher is interested in multiple people with the same surname. Let’s say that I wasn’t sure if John Smith’s first name was Jo, Jon, John, Jonathan, or Joseph. Using “First letters,” I could type “Smith, Jo” and hit enter, producing 2,160 entries in the ORI (Figure 6).

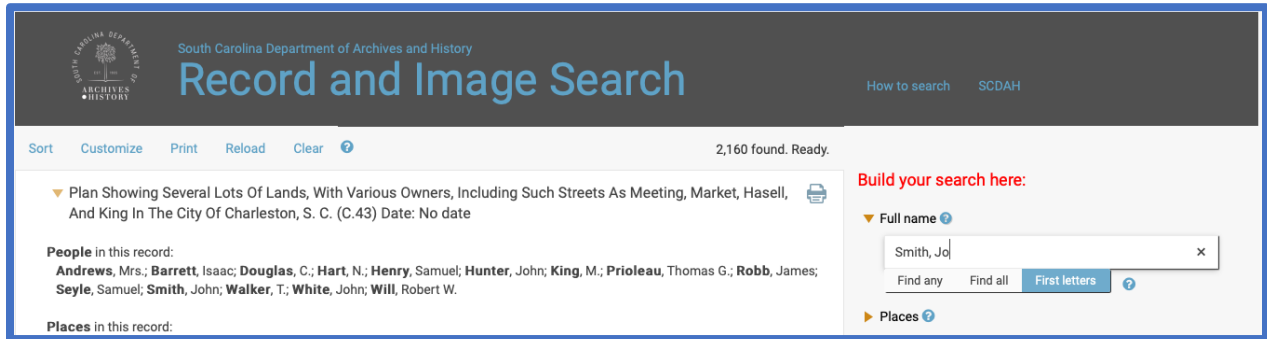


Figure 6

SEARCH METHOD #2: BY PLACE

The second method for searching the ORI is to look for place names. This can be useful for researchers who are specifically interested in a certain town, area, or geographical landmark. It can also help narrow down searches when combined with other search boxes.

To search for a specific place, use the “Places” box. Begin typing a city, town, county, river, creek, street, or any other geographic term you are interested in. As always, remember that the ORI’s auto-complete drop-down menu will update with possible outcomes for your search. If there are not any ORI entries that mention your search term, the drop-down will say “No Data Found.”

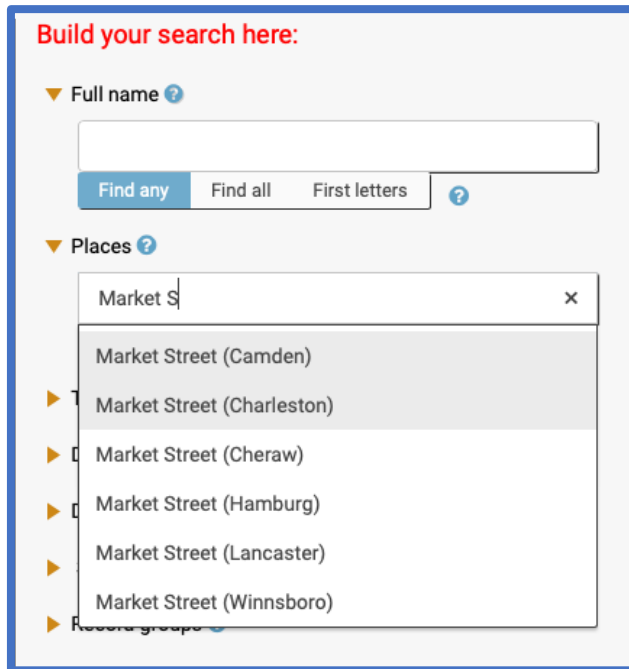


Figure 7

If a researcher was interested in any records that include Market Street in Charleston, they could begin typing “Market S” and several possibilities would pop up in the drop-down box (left).

The “Places” search bar also includes the option to “Find Any” or “Find All.” This functions exactly the same as with the “Full Name” search bar. When searching multiple place names at once, “Find any” will pull any records that include at least one of the search terms (Figure 8-A). “Find all” will only pull records that include every search term entered (Figure 8-B).

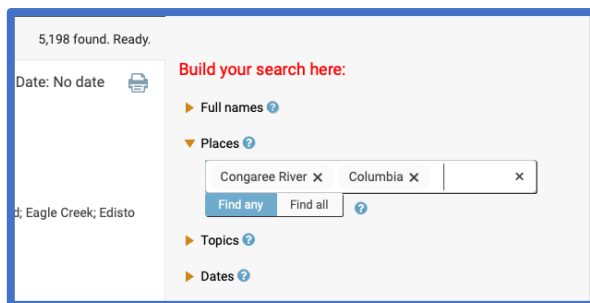


Figure 8-A

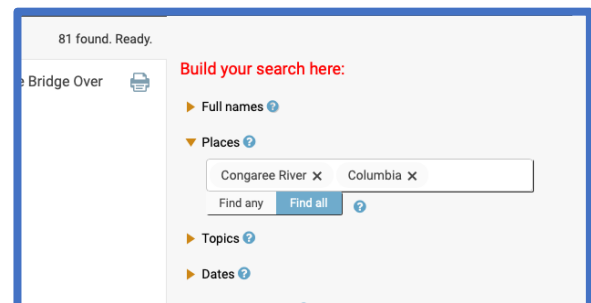


Figure 8-B

SEARCH METHOD #3: BY SERIES, RECORD GROUP, OR DOCUMENT TYPE

Our records are typically arranged into Record Groups based on the office that created them and then into “Series” based on the function that the records played. For example, a petition to the General Assembly requesting that a bridge be built over the Wateree River would fall under the General Assembly Record Group (S165) and into the Petitions series (S165015). Often times, historical or legal research requires the researcher to look at entire bodies of records. This type of research is also available on the ORI.

To view entire series, use the “Series” search bar. When you click into the search bar, the drop-down menu will automatically appear with every series currently indexed in the ORI. You can scroll through the list and click on the one you’d like to view, or you can search. It is important to note that the “Series” search function is based on the *official title* of the series, NOT the archives’ series number (ex: “S165015”, Figure 9-A). If you want to search for Petitions to the General Assembly, you would have to begin typing “Petitions,” NOT “S165015” (Figure 9-B).

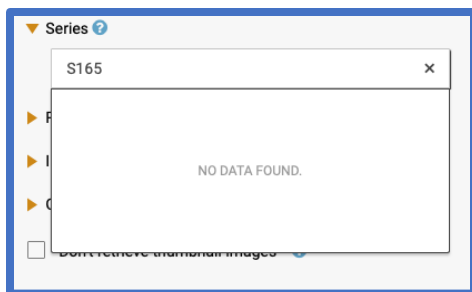


Figure 9-A

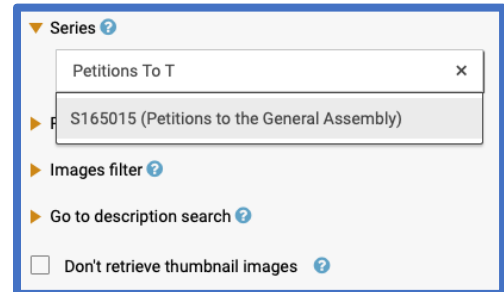


Figure 9-B

Searching for series is probably the most common way to access entire sets of records, but you can also use the “Record Group” or “Document types” search bars to accomplish similar outcomes. “Document types” can be particularly useful when combined with “Full Name” and/or “Places.” For example, if you are only interested in finding a will for John Smith, you can type “Smith, John” in the “Full Name” bar and “Wills” in the “Document types” bar (Figure 10). Again, if “No data found” appears in the drop-down box, it means that there are currently no documents of that type associated with the name you have entered.

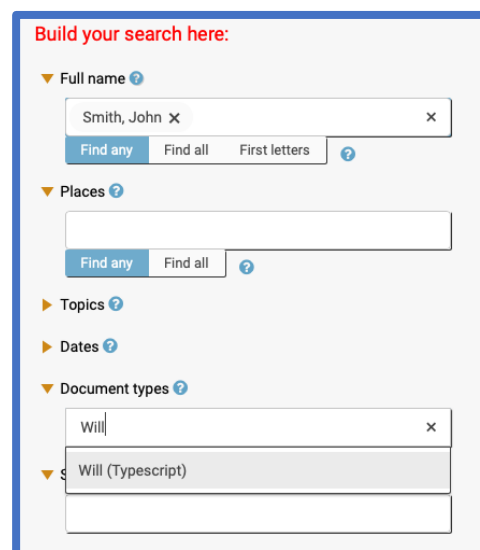


Figure 10

Combining search terms like names and series, document types, or record groups is the best way to narrow down broad searches. If you are looking for something specific, like a will for John Smith, the fastest way to find it is to combine “Smith, John” with “Wills” in the document types bar.

RESEARCH TIP #2: SORTING AND CUSTOMIZING RESULTS

Once you have completed a search, the ORI has several options for sorting and customizing the appearance of the results. To sort records, mouse over the “Sort” link towards the top of the screen. You can choose to sort the records alphabetically by description, chronologically, or sequentially by Archives ID (which essentially puts records in the same order they appear in archival boxes or on microfilm) (Figure 11). You can also mouse over the “Customize” link and choose to hide any of the indexing information. This feature can be nice when browsing records looking for specific names, places, or topics, because you can hide all other information from the screen.

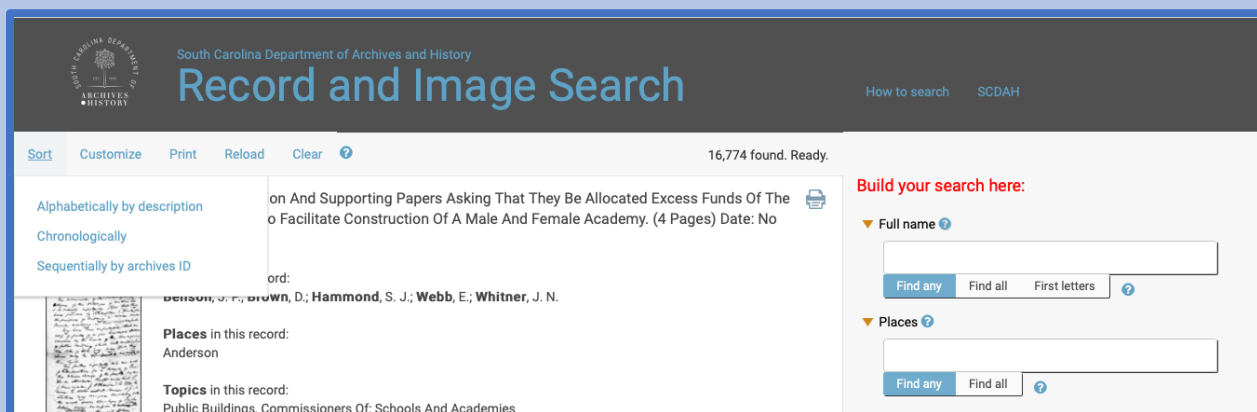


Figure 11

At the bottom of the page, the ORI will list how many items per page are being displayed and how many pages are available for the current search terms. You can, of course, change the number of items per page and navigate between pages here.

Please note that the sort, customize, and navigation features are not only for searching entire series, but work with any and all searches within the ORI.

SEARCH METHOD #4: SEARCHING BY TOPIC

The Archives has identified and entered almost 17,000 topics into the indexing information on the ORI. Researchers can search for records based on these topics using the same rules as every other category. For example, the most common topic indexed in the ORI is “Slaves, Named” with more than 20,000 entries. This search could then be combined with a place name, a specific enslaved person’s name, or a slave owner’s name to help narrow the search results to help find an enslaved ancestor. Or in other cases, using “Find All” and combining topics like “Slaves, Escaped” and “Blacks, Free” could lead a researcher to interesting findings in the ORI.

One important note is that in some cases, the “Topics” search box can be used to narrow much broader series by a specific subset of records a researcher may be interested in. For example, General Assembly Committee Reports (S165005) is a broad series that contains reports from a variety of different standing and ad hoc committees. These records are arranged chronologically, *not by committee!*

The ORI allows access to these records in ways that previously were unavailable. In the “Topics” field, the ORI indexes each committee report by committee. If a researcher was only interested in reports from the Committee on Finance, typing “Finance, Committee On” into the Topics box and combining that with “S165005 (Committee Reports)” in the Series box would narrow the almost 24,000 reports (Figure 12-A) down to just over 750 reports (Figure 12-B) filed specifically by the Finance Committee.

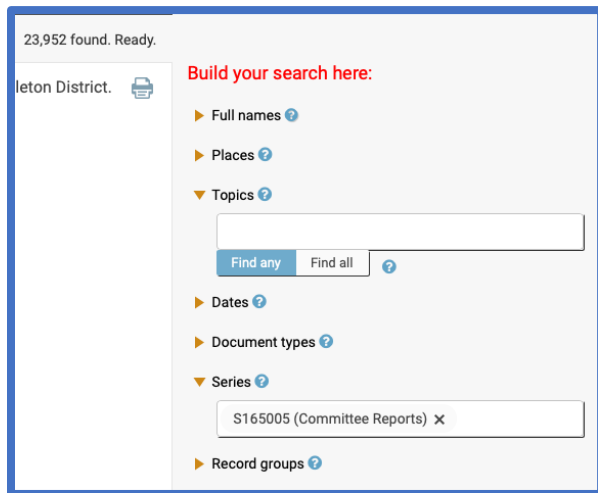


Figure 12-A

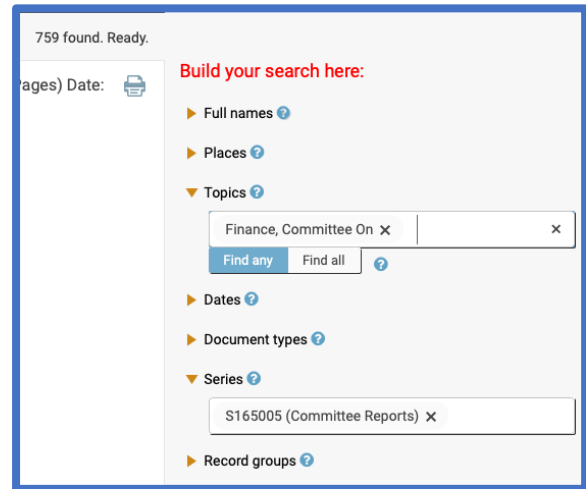


Figure 12-B

SEARCH METHOD #5: SEARCHING BY DATE

It is fairly uncommon for a researcher to want to search the SCDAH's records by date, but it can be useful to use the "Dates" box to help narrow other search results. The "Dates" Box is significantly different from the other search boxes in that you must first choose which type of date you want to enter. The options for searching dates are: Single Year, Single Month, Single Day, Range of Years, Range of Months, Range of Days, and Undated.

Each of these date types can be useful in their own way, but possibly the most useful are the "Range" options. For example, choosing "Range of Years" will bring up two boxes to enter your "low date" and your "high date." If you were trying to find a record from a specific time period, or you were only interested in multiple records from a specific time period, this would be a perfect way to achieve that goal.

Note that in Figure 13, "S165005 (Committee Reports)" is still in the "Series" Box. The "Dates" box automatically gives the possible range of records within that series (9/17/1776 thru 12/31/1884). Searching dates outside of this range will not be possible, and any date entered lower than 1776 or higher than 1884 automatically reverts to the lowest or highest applicable date. If any other search boxes were altered, the possible date range would update according to the possible results.

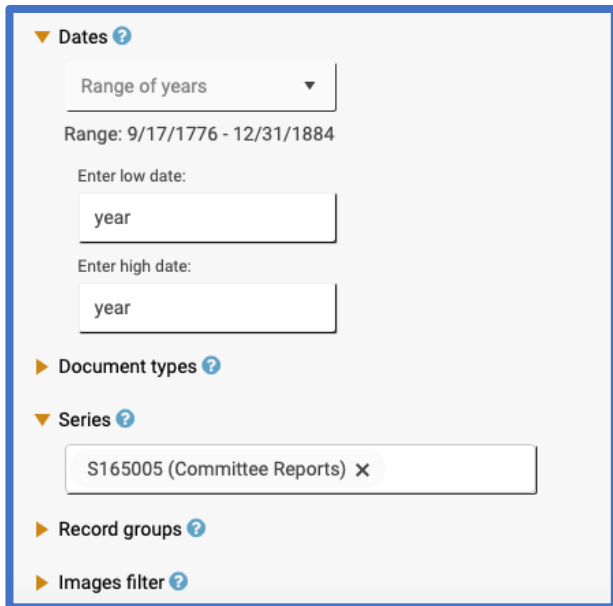


Figure 13

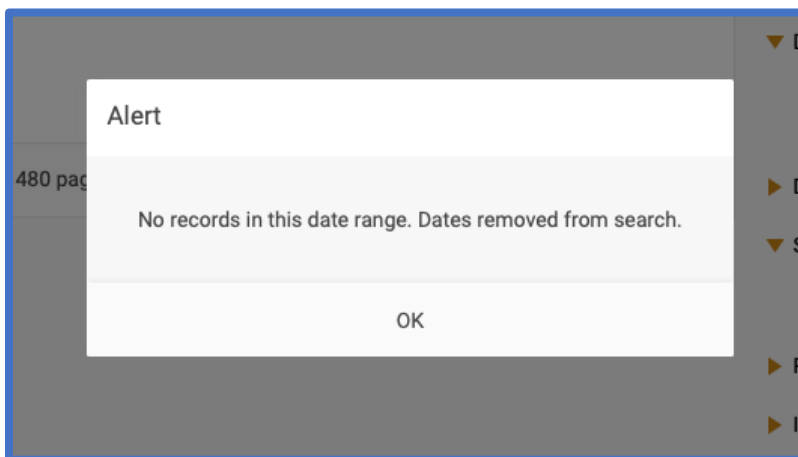


Figure 13

With the "Dates" search box, it is possible to return 0 search results. For example, choosing "Single Month" and then inputting "1777/10" in the date box within the S165005 (Committee Reports) Series will produce the result shown in Figure 14. Should this occur, simply broaden your search using a range of months or choosing an entire year!

RESEARCH TIP #3: IMAGES FILTER

As previously mentioned, roughly 40% of the ORI's indexed entries have images attached. If you are only interested in searching for records that have images, the ORI's "Images" search box allows this. To alter your search based on the availability of images, click the "Images" arrow and choose to view "Records with or without images" (this is the default option), "Only records with online images," or "Only records without online images" (Figure 15).

Each of these options can be useful. For general use to find out what the ORI has containing your search terms, always use the default option (Records with or without images). If you are researching from a distance and only want to see actual records, choose "Only records with online images." The final option is particularly useful when a researcher is planning a trip to the Archives. By viewing records *without* online images, researchers can make a list of records they want to see when physically in the Archives building. This can make their time in the Archives more fruitful and efficient!

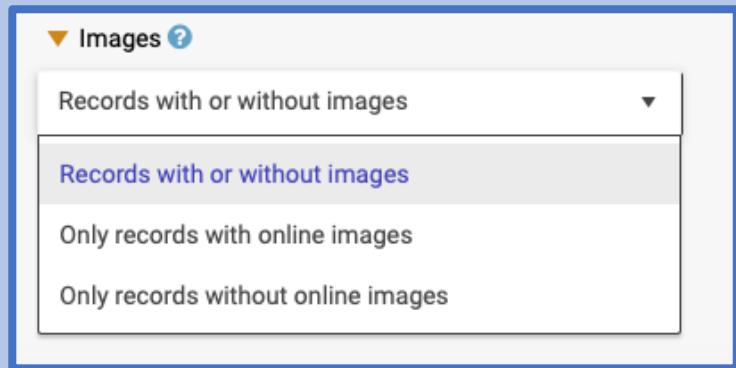


Figure 14

SEARCH METHOD #6: SEARCHING BY DESCRIPTION (KEYWORD)

Should all of the above methods and combinations of methods not meet your needs, try clicking "Go to Description Search." This will bring up a single search box that will allow you to type in any word or words you choose. The entire description of a record is searchable with this option. Note that the "drop-down box" rule of thumb still applies here.

Searching by description can be helpful if you cannot seem to produce results on the standard search page, but under normal circumstances the standard search page should be equipped to handle your search parameters.

RESEARCH TIP #4: DOWNLOADING FROM THE ORI

Once you have completed your search using the above methods, hopefully you have found a record you want to see! In some cases the images will not be available online, so you will need to order a copy or view the records in the archives building, which we will cover below.

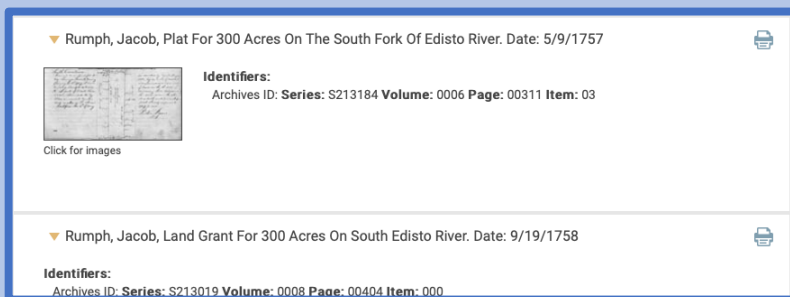


Figure 16

Notice how the Plat for 300 Acres has a thumbnail and the Land Grant and Memorial do not? This is because the Colonial Plats Series (S213184) has images, while S213019 and S111001 (Land Grants and Memorials) do not. To view the Jacob Rumph plat, simply click on the thumbnail!

In other cases where the images are available online, a thumbnail will appear in the upper left corner of the entry. For example, if I search "Rumph, Jacob" and do not alter any other search boxes, several records appear in the results (Figure 16).



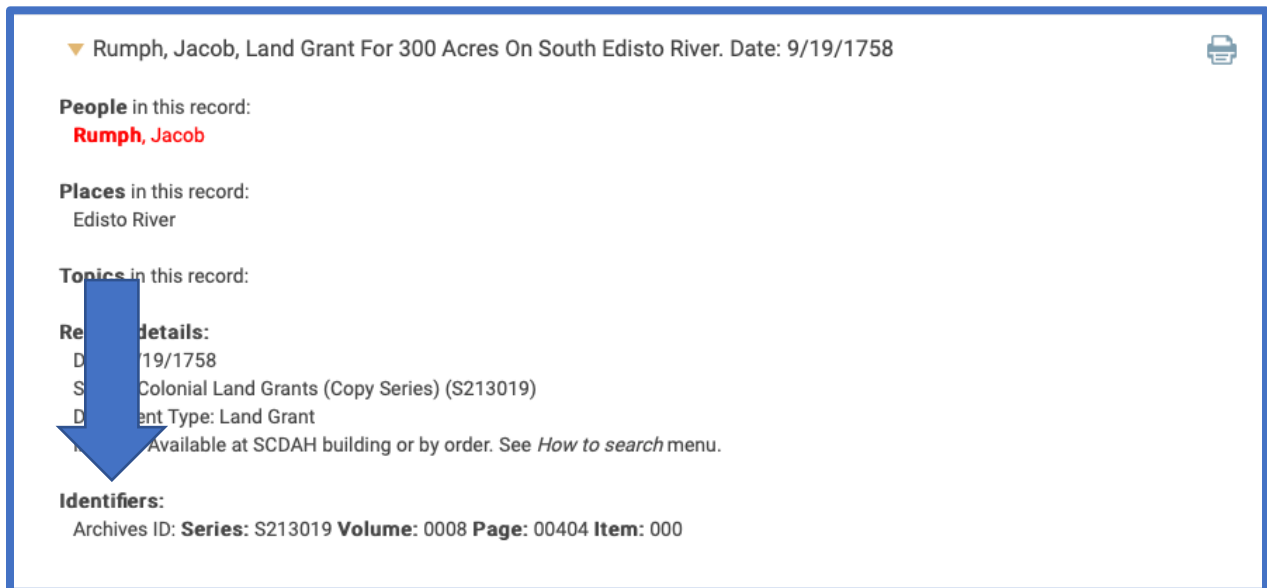
Figure 17


There are several things worth noting in Figure 17. In the upper left corner, notice that it says "1/1." That means there is only one image for this record. If there were multiple images, you would be able to click an arrow on the sides of the page to navigate between them. Next, notice the magnifying glasses in the upper right corner. These allow you to zoom in and zoom out. You can also use the mouse to click and drag the image after you have zoomed. Finally, notice the arrow pointing downwards to a horizontal line. This button allows you to download the image as it appears on the screen. If you have found an image that you want to save or print, click the download button. The image will save to your computer's download folder, titled based on the Archives ID. After downloading, you are free to rename, save, or print the image based on your needs.

ORDERING COPIES

Many records in the ORI do not have images available online. In those cases, there are two ways to see the records. First, you can contact the Archives to order a copy of the image or images you would like to see. You can do this by calling the Archives Reference Room at (803) 896-6104 or (803) 896-6105, or by filling out a genealogy or historical research request form at [this link](#).

When making a request, it is immensely helpful to the SCDAH Reference Archivists to have a direct citation for records you are interested in. Let's look at the example of Jacob Rumph's Land Grant (Figure 18).



▼ Rumph, Jacob, Land Grant For 300 Acres On South Edisto River. Date: 9/19/1758 

People in this record:
Rumph, Jacob

Places in this record:
Edisto River

Topics in this record:

Record details:
Date: 9/19/1758
Series: Colonial Land Grants (Copy Series) (S213019)
Document Type: Land Grant
Available at SCDAH building or by order. See *How to search* menu.

Identifiers:
Archives ID: **Series:** S213019 **Volume:** 0008 **Page:** 00404 **Item:** 000

Figure 18

In this record, the most helpful information for the Reference Archivists is found in the "Identifiers" section. In your request, be sure to include a basic description of what the record is. But also make sure that you include "S213019, volume 8, page 404." A perfect reference request might look something like the following: "I would like to order a copy of Jacob Rumph's Land Grant for 300 Acres on the South Edisto River, 9/19/1758. Series S213019, Vol. 8, page 404." This will help the archivists to more effectively answer your request!

PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP TO THE SCDAH

If you are planning to make a visit to the Archives in Columbia, the best use of your time at home would be making a list of records you would like to see when you are in the building. As above, the most helpful information will be the series, volume, and page numbers along with a basic description. Many of the records indexed online are available on microfilm in the search room, but some are only available in their original paper format. Making a list of records you would like to see would allow on-site reference staff to quickly and effectively set you up for success during your visit!

Before your visit, you may also choose to print individual entries by hitting the printer symbol in the upper right hand of each item (Figure 19-A). This will automatically download a PDF of the entry that you can print or save on your computer. Another option is to print an entire page of search results. At the top of the results window, click the “Print” button. This will generate a report of all entries on the current page, which you can print or save on your computer (Figure 19-B). Once you have generated a search with entries that you would like to see at the Archives, it would be a great idea to print the list and bring it with you!

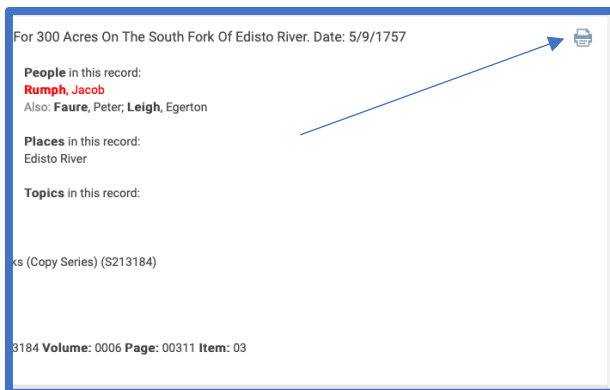


Figure 19-A



Figure 19-B

CONCLUSION

The Online Records Index is constantly being updated. Recently, we have added images to several series, including the Petitions to the General Assembly (S165015). We have also added indexing information *and* images for several counties' Magistrates and Free Holders Court records (for example, Spartanburg County, L42211). Please continue to check the ORI for additional records and index entries!

Thank you for your interest in the SCDAAH Online Records Index. If you have any questions, comments, or need additional help with your research, please do not hesitate to contact us at (803) 896-6104 or submit a research request at: <https://scdah.sc.gov/research-and-genealogy/research-requests>