ARCHIVES

WHAT IS IN THE DEPARTMENTAL ARCHIVES ?

What is in the departmental archives?

Stored documents

By law, archives are "all documents, whatever their date, form and medium, produced or received by any natural or legal person and any public or private service or organization in the exercise of their business". (Heritage Code, Book I, article 211-1).

For the period prior to the Revolution, documents held in departmental archives were from royal administrative or legal institutions and from ecclesiastical institutions and families. The most recent documents are primarily from state services located in the department (prefecture, police, justice, taxation) and from the services of the General Council.

Private collections (families, businesses, trade unions) are also numerous. Hospital records such as those of some municipalities are also held in the Departmental Archives.

Finally, notarized documents from the fifteenth century are collected in a volume of special importance.

Why consult the departmental archives?

Reasons for research

Everyone has the right to access the departmental archives and records that are kept there after registration, subject to presentation of proper identification. There are many reasons why you might want to go the reading room.

Recreational research

- genealogy
- source of property

Scientific / historical research

- for private use
- in an association
- for publication
- as part of studies

Administrative research

- at the request of a public agency
- for legal purposes
- for professional purposes

How are the documents organized?

The classification scheme

The archives are filed according to historical periods and the areas they affect, as part of a classification structure: this is a master plan that distributes the documents based on their origin, the different services that may have produced them, their main themes of action and divisions and subdivisions.

The departmental archive classification framework is in principle the same for all departments.

Series

The series is the main division of the classification scheme. Each series is designated by a letter :

- A à H () for documents prior to the French Revolution
- K () et L for the revolutionary period
- M à Z () for the period 1800-1940
- W () for all documents produced since 1940

Sub-series

The sub-series is a subdivision of the classification scheme. The series letter is attached to a second letter or there is a number in front of it. There may also be "sub-sub-series" with a number after the letter of the series.

Collections (Fonds)

The number placed before the series letter sometimes indicates a collection rather than a sub-series. A collection is a set of documents, formed organically by a producer (government, company, individual) in the exercise of its business.

Articles

Within a collection or sub-series there are articles identified with continuous numbering (the number comes after the series / sub-series identification). The article is the unit of packaging of the materials (box, register, roll). The articles are the unit that can be viewed in the reading room. Each article is identified by a unique shelf mark, which is its reference.

Shelf mark

The shelf mark identifies the articles; it consists of different elements of context of the article: identification of t he series, sub-series, the collection, the article. Examples :

- Article 4 P 34 / 449
  - *P = Modern series (1800 to 1940) involving finances, registration, posts, water and forests*
  - *4P = Registration sub-series*
  - *34 = Atlas Survey sub-series*
  - *449 = 449th article of the atlas of the municipality of Touquin*
  - *To consult the registration atlas of the municipality of Touquin, article 4P34 / 4 needs to be requested*
  - *Article 192 E 1*
    - *E = Series of notarial and civil register collections*
    - *192 E = Collection of notarial office of Montereau-Fault-Yonne III III*
    - *1 = first article of the collection of the notarial office*

How is the research done ?

The tools

A range of research tools is available to readers in reading rooms.

Inventory classifications

- Numerical indexes organized by series: each archive article is described in shelf number order. The oldest indexes are detailed numerical ones, in which the analysis is carried out in more detail; note, however, that they are not always comprehensive. This type of search tool is consulted when the source of the document and the archive collection to be searched are known.
- Methodical indexes on a given theme: each article is described thematically irrespective of the order of the shelf mark.

Files

- For old series: search by place names, by surname, by keywords.
- For court collections: search by court, document categories and years.
- For the prefecture: search by document categories and years.
- For the library: search by names of places and people.

A computer search engine

For documents described and indexed in the computerized database of the Departmental Archives of Seine-et-Marne (Briard - Regional Computerized Archive Database for Documentary Searches), searches can be perform ed by keyword, place name or own name using the Gaia computer search engine (http://www.archinoe.fr/cg47/registre.php)

Where to start ?

First steps

Administrative search

For administrative procedures, the administration that is the source of the desired documents must be identifie d. This enables the search to be limited to the right series, sub-series and collections. Search examples :

- A declaration of inheritance: in the registration archives (series C,Q (), QP, CA, W (), depending on historical period). The corresponding search tools methodically collect the documents returned by the different registries.
- Notarised deed: in the E series
- A cadastral plan: sub-series 4P for the Napoleonic cadastre (land register), seriesW () for the revised cadastre and land reconstitution. The inventories list the collections by municipality.
- A judgement: series UP. The search can be performed in the manual file, by court and case type.

Cultural search

For a scientific or historical search, the approach is more cross-cutting. Information about a place, building, fa mily or a specific subject can be found in different documents, different series, different collections. The search therefore starts by querying the relevant period, the type of documents that the subject might appear in and the governments and public or private organizations that may have been involved for one reason or another.

Genealogical search

This kind of very specific research is the subject of adetailed guide

Consultation not possible, why?

Certain documents are not accessible

When a document is identified for consultation, its disclosure is sometimes impossible: the software blocks the command, the room's presidency rejects the request. Several reasons may explain this.

Document status

When a document is badly damaged, further viewing degrades it. This does not make the document completely inaccessible, as there is often a reproduction (paper, microfilm, or scanned copy). In this case, the Archive offic ers indicate the corresponding shelf mark so that the reader can consult it.

Consultation of rare and valuable documents is subject to the approval of the management of the Departmental Archives. There is then a delay in communication (half-day or full-day). These documents, however, have been r eproduced, and, unlike the original, the reproduction is freely available for consultation, including online for som e documents, such as supply corps plans.

A document is also inaccessible if it is already being used by another reader or if it has been withdrawn from st orage for reproduction. In this case, the room's presidency can be approached for the expected date of return of the document

The departmental archives hold private, family and other archives. When archives are donated or deposited, the

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owner chooses the method of disclosure of the documents - these are sometimes restrictive and subject to thei r approval.

Document release periods

More often than not, consultation is not possible because of the release periods to which the documents are su bject. The current law on archives (Heritage Code, Book II, Chapter 3) provides that certain documents must not be disclosed before a specified time period, in order to respect privacy, to protect trade and industrial secrets, t o protect national defence, etc. An exception may, however, be requested.

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