Learning about the AOS archives: a basic user guide.
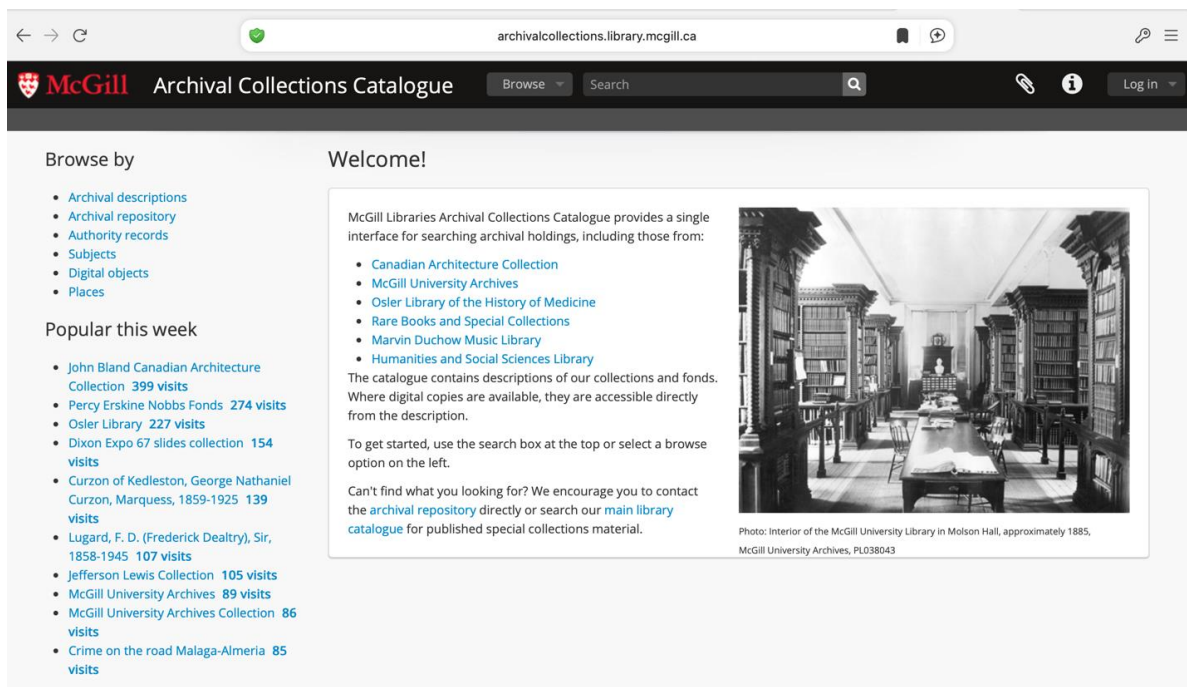
At the beginning of 2025, with funds provided by the American Osler Society, the Osler Library of the History of Medicine hired an archivist to update the Society archives. As part of this project, the contents of the archives were updated in McGill's archives management system, AtoM (which stands for Access to Memory and is usually pronounced A-to-M). We hope that this guide will help interested individuals explore the digital finding aid for the American Osler Society Fonds (Osler Library Archives P125).

The portal through which one accesses archival material at McGill is a site that brings together collections from across all McGill Libraries: https://archivalcollections.library.mcgill.ca/.

You will notice on the side bar of the above screenshot that some titles end with the word 'Fonds' and others with 'Collection.' These are important distinctions in the archival world, and to understand them at a basic level will also help define what the American Osler Society Fonds is, and what it is not. Briefly, a 'collection' consists of material that has been curated (for instance around a person, organization, or theme). A fonds (singular and plural) denotes material of a single origin and reflects the accumulation of material relating to the activities of an individual or organization. Since the American Osler Society archives

consist of materials generated by the AOS in the process of fulfilling its organizational mandate, we talk about the American Osler Society Fonds.
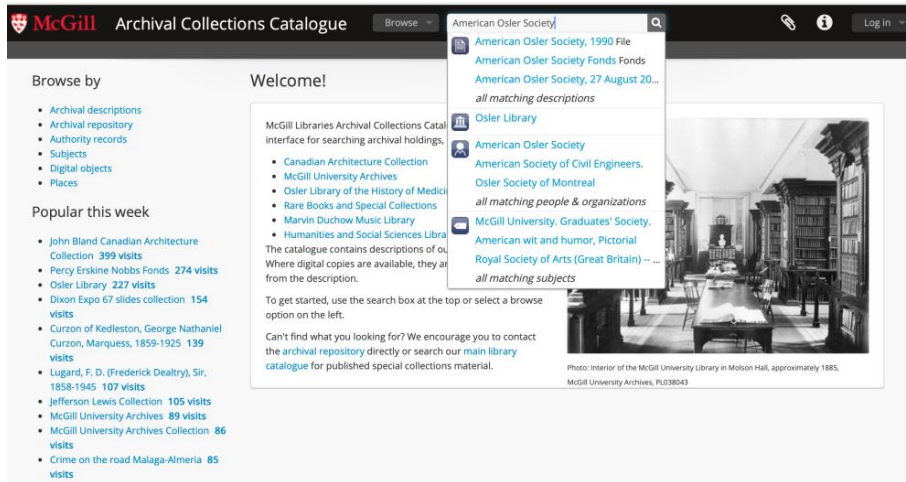
If you want to go directly to the American Osler Society Fonds, you can type directly into the "browse" box at the top of the landing page. This will show you results that combine the terms "American"

"Osler" "Society", but as you can see, the "American Osler Society Fonds" is the 2ⁿᵈ result that you can click. If you choose this direct route, then you can explore the AOS fonds in the same way as will be shown below (see just after the discussion of the Osler Library landing page).

Alternatively, you may wish to go directly to the Osler Library archives page and explore from there. Within AtoM, the Osler Library page looks like this:
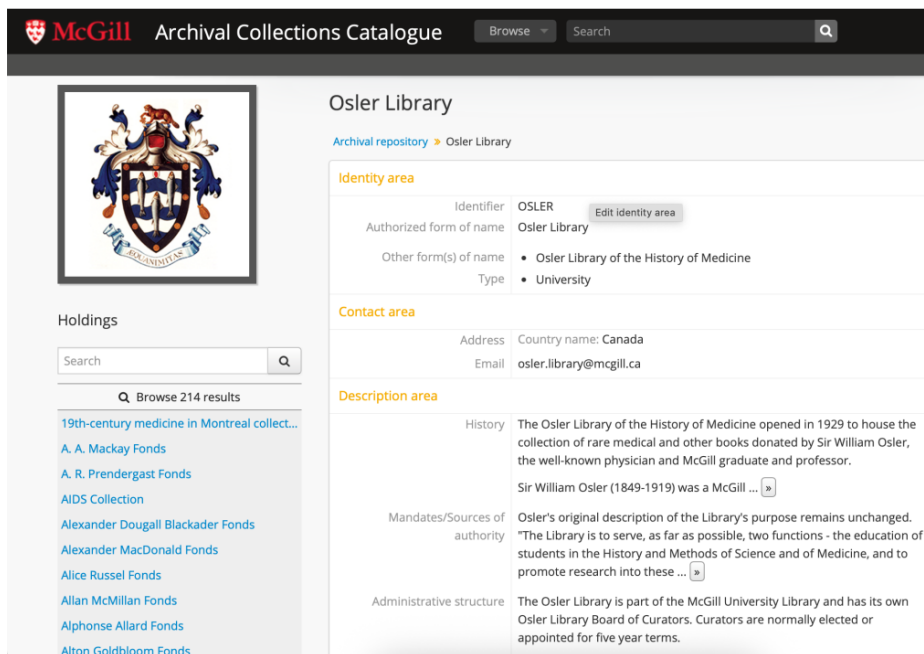
Here, you can browse from the top bar, as on the McGill landing page. For the American Osler Society specifically, your results will be the same, or at least very similar, on the Osler Library vs. the large McGill page because you are searching for an organization whose records exist only at the Osler Library, not in other McGill repositories.

You can also use the "search" bar in the left column, which will limit your results to those within Osler Library holdings. If you don't want to enter a search, you can "browse" your way to the American Osler Society fonds. If you hit the forward button to advance to the second page of the alphabetical list, you'll see the American Osler Society Fonds.
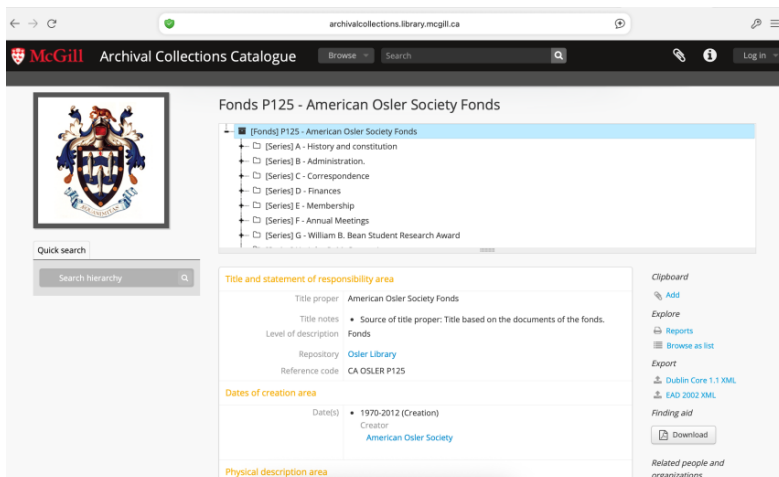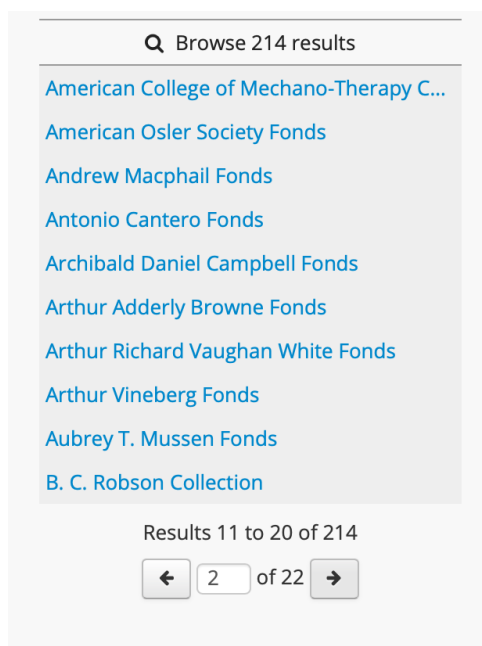
However you choose to navigate to the American Osler Society Fonds, the image to the left is what you'll see when you arrive at the digital description of the collection.

Note that the bottom of the results box is a moving bar, so if you click and hold on the center spot (darker rectangle), you can expand so that the page looks like this:

Fonds P125 - American Osler Society Fonds

[Fonds] P125 - American Osler Society Fonds
- [Series] A - History and constitution
- [Series] B - Administration.
- [Series] C - Correspondence
- [Series] D - Finances
- [Series] E - Membership
- [Series] F - Annual Meetings
- [Series] G - William B. Bean Student Research Award
- [Series] H - John P. McGovern Lecture
- [Series] I - Public Relations and Links with Other Organizations
- [Series] J - Publications
- [Series] K - Special Projects
- [Series] L - Tributes

Title and statement of responsibility area

Title proper	American Osler Society Fonds
Title notes	• Source of title proper: Title based on the documents of the fonds.
Level of description	Fonds
Repository	Osler Library
Reference code	CA OSLER P125

Dates of creation area

Clipboard
🔖 Add
Explore
🖨 Reports
≡ Browse as list
Export
⬇ Dublin Core 1.1 XML
⬇ EAD 2002 XML

If you want to explore to see what is in the collection, you can hit any of the small + symbols in the tree and the list will expand to show you what is in the corresponding series. There is no "+" sign for the final series, "Tributes", which means that there are no subseries, though you can click on the series line to see a description of the contents within that series.

Subseries 3 - The Oslerian

- [Series] G - William B. Bean Student Research Award
- [Series] H - John P. McGovern Lecture
- [Series] I - Public Relations and Links with Other Organizations
- [Series] J - Publications
  - [Subseries] 1 - Persisting Osler
  - [Subseries] 2 - American Osler Society, inc. : Biographical Directory
  - [Subseries] 3 - The Oslerian
- [Series] K - Special Projects
- [Series] L - Tributes

As you can see here, expanding the Publications series shows you that we have subseries for the Persisting Osler, the AOS Biographical Directory, and The Oslerian (the latter of which happens to be highlighted here).

If you were to click on the line for The Oslerian, currently highlighted, you would see a description of that subseries, including information about the extent of the holdings:

Title and statement of responsibility area

Title proper	The Oslerian
Title notes	• Source of title proper: Title based on contents.
Level of description	Subseries
Repository	Osler Library
Reference code	CA OSLER P125-J-3

Dates of creation area

Date(s)	• 2000-2007 (Creation)

Physical description area

Physical description	5.8 cm of textual records.

Archival description area

Name of creator	American Osler Society (1970-)
Scope and content	Subseries consists of issues of the American Osler Society newsletter, The Oslerian, as well as accompanying material sent as mail-outs to members, including letters to members and reprints of articles and essays published by members or of interest to … »

Perhaps you want to search the collection to see if it holds information by or about a former member. As an example, what happens if we search for "Golden"? [Note that I have put the name in the "Quick search" box, but it could just as well go in the search box in the top bar.]

The results are as follows:

As you can see in the left column, there are four proposed headings that have "Golden" somewhere in the metadata. You can click on any one of those for more information.

In the case of The Oslerian (highlighted), the "scope and contents" notes reveal that Richard Golden was the author of two pieces listed in the metadata:

> Golden, Richard L. "Gertrude Stein (1874-1946) and the nucleus of Darkschewitsch: a discursive commentary" Journal of Medical Biography, Vol. 17, 2009
>
> Golden, Richard L. "William Osler, Urolithiasis, and God's Own Medicine" Urology, Vol. 74, No. 3, 2009

There are limits to what one can uncover by accessing the American Osler Society finding aid in AtoM, but the information available provides a good sense of the scope of the fonds. The fonds is currently described to the sub-series level, which means that you can see which general categories the fonds holds, but not individual items or even folder titles within the sub-series. Moreover, you cannot see the contents of the records from afar since they have not been digitized. Nonetheless, knowing the basics of what is in the records of the American Osler Society Fonds will provide you with a starting point from which you can ask Osler Library staff for information or guidance.