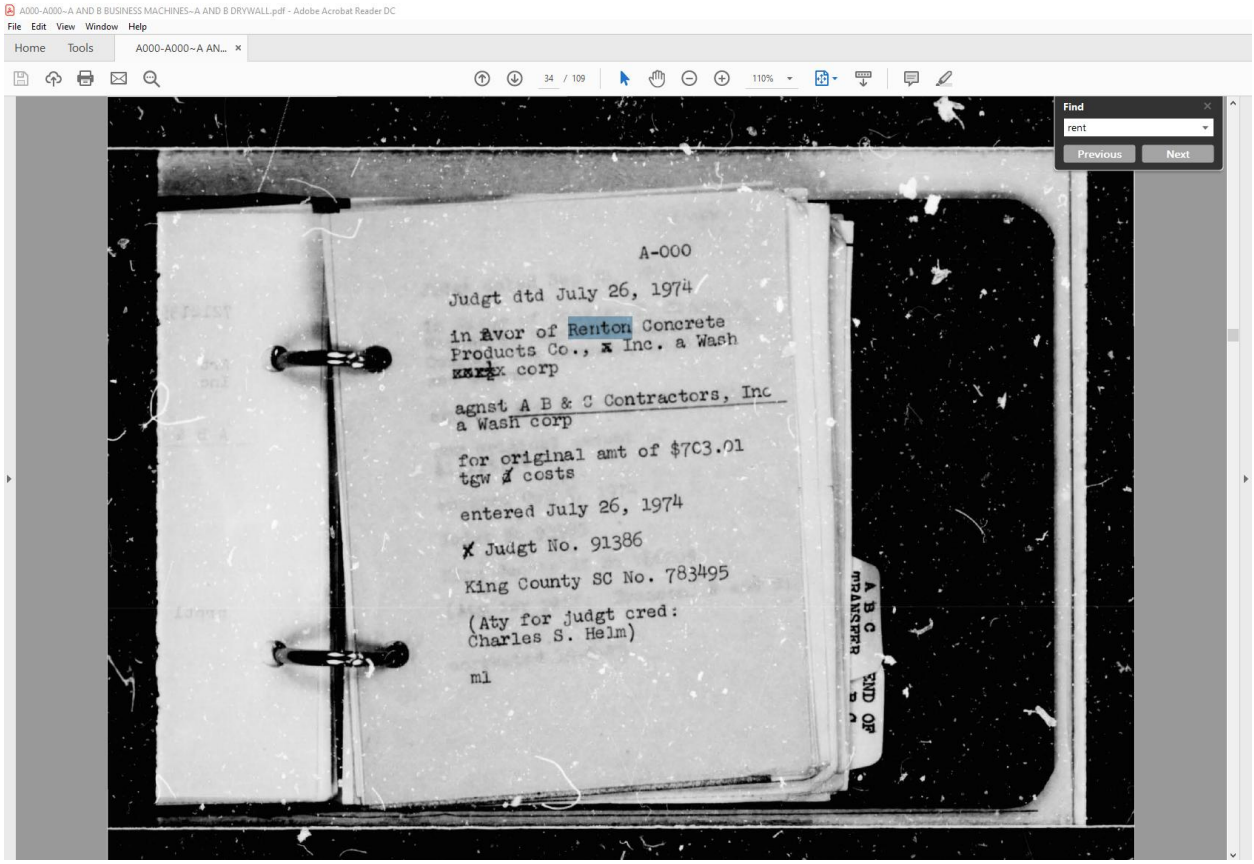
How to Keyword Search in Adobe Acrobat

Note the instructions are for Acrobat Reader DC (2019) other versions may be slightly different as to where to access the find and advance search functionality but they have existed since at least Acrobat 4.

Keyword Search within the Currently Opened Document

1. Open the file in acrobat
2. Select from the pull down menus: Edit>Find or (Ctrl+F)
3. Type in the keyword you are looking for and hit enter
4. You will be shown the first instance of that word
5. Click next to see the next instance

Notice in the graphic below that it will find any instance of that string of text by default. There are advanced tools that allow you more refined searching using the Advanced Search Feature (Shift+Ctrl+F)

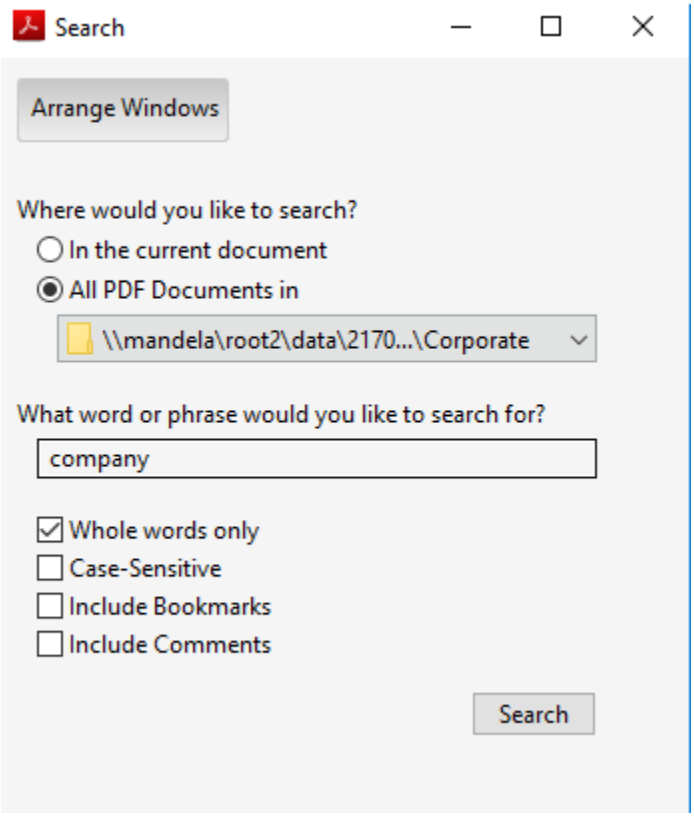


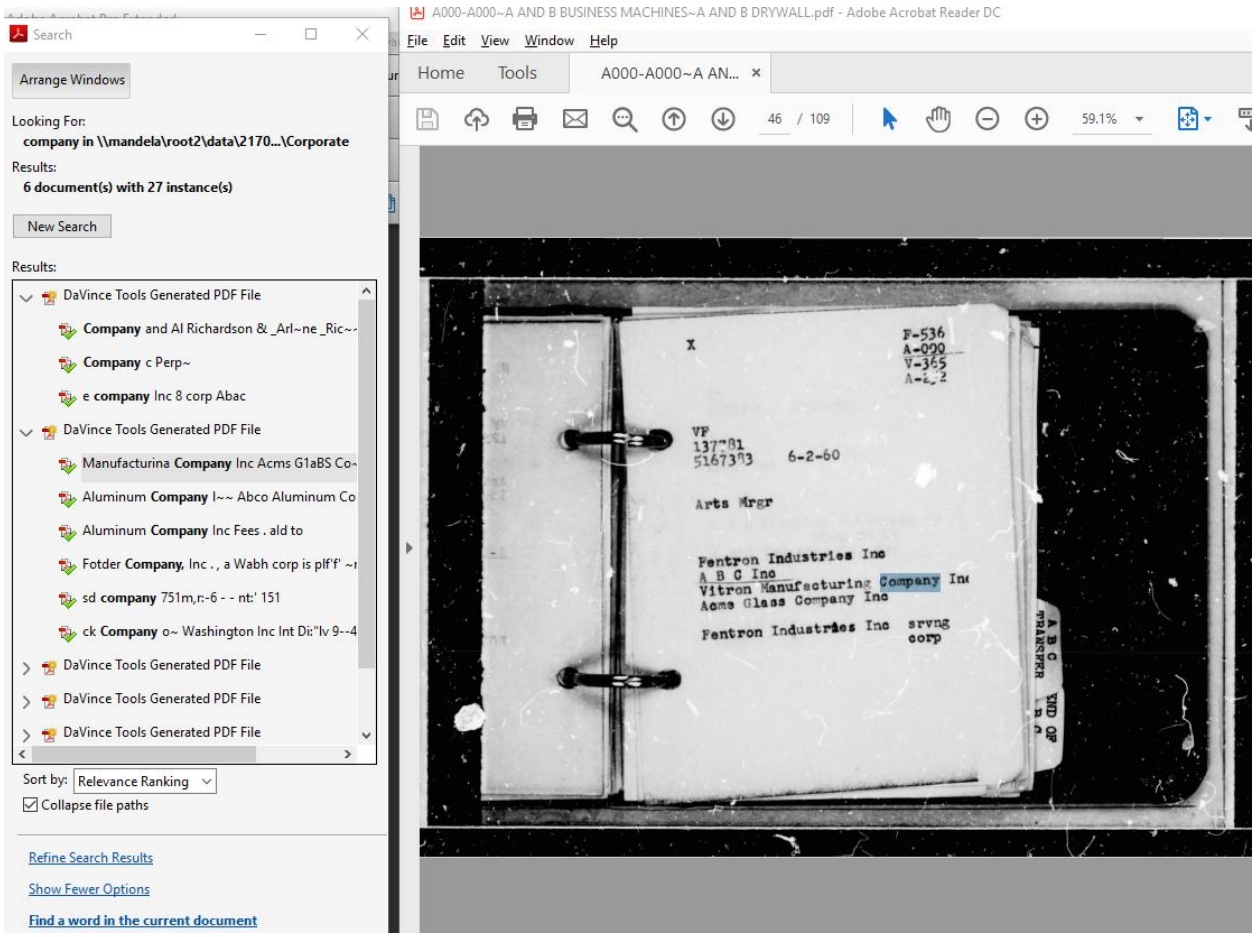
Keyword Search across multiple PDF files

Open up acrobat

1. From the pull down menus select Edit> Advance Search (Shift+Ctrl+F)

2. Browse for the directory that contains the extent of the pdf files you wish to search (acrobat will search all subdirectories)
3. Enter the search text and any advanced options you desire. (notice more options at the bottom)
4. You are then presented with a list of places for which the text was found based on the options you selected. Each top level link is a pdf file and by clicking on the arrow to the left of the document you are show a list of links to pages where the text was found. Acrobat will show you the text in context. If you click on the link it will open the pdf and navigate you to that location within the document.





Searching a directory of thousands of files can be time consuming using this technique. If you have a large collection of pdf files (10k files or more) consider using alternate indexing techniques.

There are imbedded indexes, cataloging and server side toolkits (like Foxit) that can make searching tens of thousands of pdf files instantaneously.