



Primary and Secondary Sources

Knowing the difference between primary and secondary sources can help you as you go further with your research. An advanced scholar will tend to rely on primary sources for facts. Secondary sources will be used to supplement understanding or interpretation of those facts.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Are sources generated by a particular thing or event, created by someone who participated in the events or directly witnessed it. A primary source will:

- Provide first-hand testimony and direct evidence of the topic
- Be created by those directly experiencing the thing or event being documented
- Be created at the time of the events being documented
- Can include memoirs, autobiographies, and oral histories recorded later
- Be in original, unedited form



SECONDARY SOURCES

Are sources that contain later analysis or reports of particular events, created by those who have not participated in the events or who have not directly witnessed them. A secondary source will often contain information that has been:

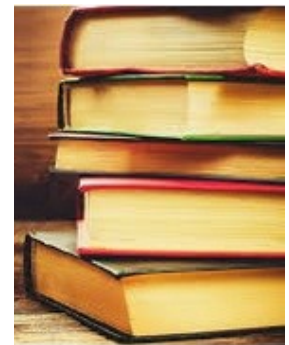
- Interpreted, commented upon, analyzed, edited or otherwise processed so that it no longer conveys the freshness of the original
- Based on primary resource

Examples of Primary Sources:

- Original Documents or Documentation
- Diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, blogs, personal journals
- Speeches and transcripts of speeches
- Correspondence, letters, email, discussion threads, chat transcripts
- Interviews, newspaper stories
- Oral histories, audio recordings
- Official records, surveys, meetings, meeting minutes
- Photographs, video recordings
- Laws, legislative hearings
- Creative Works
- Manuscripts (poetry, drama, novels)
- Music
- Art
- Relics & Artifacts
- Plant or animal specimens
- Coins
- Tools

Examples of Secondary Sources:

- History textbooks
- Dictionaries
- Encyclopedias
- Book reviews
- Reports, theses, dissertations
- Databases and catalogues
- Edited audio or



Reference Services
Phone: 337-482-6030
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