

Guide to Sources

There are many different ways to find sources when researching a topic. In addition to the library and Internet, you may want to consider some of the following options:

- Organizations that exist within your topic
- College departments
- Companies that exist within your topic
- Experts in your topic field
- Government offices
- State and local historical societies

Do not forget to ask the media specialists in the library for assistances. They are probably one of the best resources available.

Primary Sources vs. Secondary Sources

* Remember sources are only useful if you gain something from them. If you have a primary source but you can't read it or it doesn't really connect to your topic, then it is of no use to you.*

Primary Sources:

These sources have a direct relationship to your topic because they:

- Were written or produced in the time period you are studying
- Are eyewitness accounts of historical events
- Are documents related to specific historical events
- Are later recollections by participants in historic events

Examples of primary sources:

Diaries	Autobiographies	Government Records
Photographs	Interviews with participants	Manuscript collections
Newspapers of the Era	Letters	Music of the Era
Historical Objects		

Secondary Sources:

Sources where the writer was not an eyewitness to, or a participant in, the historic event.

Secondary sources are usually published books or articles by an author who makes a personal interpretation about a topic based on a primary source. Most library books are secondary sources, as are encyclopedias. Secondary sources are useful because they provide important background information about your topic. Often times you will find primary sources listed in the bibliographies of secondary sources.

Remember that secondary sources interpret primary source material and draw conclusions about the event. As a researcher, you want to interpret information yourself and draw your own conclusions. Recognize that one secondary source interpretation does not make it the correct interpretation.

Examples of Secondary Sources:

Biographies	Encyclopedias	History Textbooks
Interviews with scholars	Books about the topic	Articles about the topic
Media Documentaries		

Source Requirements

30 sources (balanced between primary and secondary) is your minimum requirement. I would suspect that most of you may have more. Please do NOT include information from encyclopedias in your project without speaking with me about this. The internet is an excellent place to find primary sources, but I would limit your number of internet sources and have balance between that and print as well.

As with most things in life, there will be some instances when a clear-cut line will not be possible with a particular source. This is what I call gray areas. If you are unsure about the classification of a particular source, bring it in and we can discuss it. It is possible for a source to fall into both categories.