



# Primary & Secondary Sources

## About This Guide

This guide provides information to help identify and locate primary and secondary sources.

## What are Primary Sources?

- According to the UC Berkeley Library Research Guide: "Primary sources enable the researcher to get as close as possible to what actually happened during an historical event or time period."
- The UCLA Institute on Primary Resources states that "primary resources provide firsthand evidence of historical events. They are generally unpublished materials, such as manuscripts, photographs, maps, artifacts, audio and video recordings, oral histories, postcards, and posters. In some instances, published materials can also be viewed as primary materials for the period in which they were written."
- The Ohio Historical Society defines primary sources as a "source created by people who actually saw or participated in an event and recorded that event or their reactions to it immediately after the event."

One can view a primary source as a first-hand account of an event. It is important to note that primary sources "present information in its original form, neither interpreted nor condensed nor evaluated by other writers" (Quinnipiac University). As a researcher, using primary sources offers you the unique opportunity to perform original analysis and formulate your own theory or opinion. Primary sources can also come in any form. This may include, but not be limited to, material in print and sound or video recordings.

## How to find Primary Sources at the Leatherby Libraries:

Search the Leatherby Libraries Catalog or WorldCat by:

- **AUTHOR:** search by an author's name to find materials written by that person.
- **SUBJECT:** the term "Sources" is the official subject sub-heading used in both the Library catalog and WorldCat for primary sources.

Example: the subject heading "Reformation - Sources" indicates works that contain primary sources on the Reformation.

Library catalog (books, e-books, videos, and more)		
KEYWORD		Search
TITLE/Journal TITLE		
AUTHOR		Renew Item
SUBJECT	or	Reserves by Cours
CALL NUMBER		
KEYWORD		
ISBN/ISSN		xt journals, newspapers, and more)

  

44	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Reformation Scotland</a>
45	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Reformation Social Aspects England : AV</a>
46	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Reformation Sources</a>
47	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Reformation Switzerland</a>
48	<input type="checkbox"/>	<a href="#">Reformation Switzerland Zurich Biograph</a>

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- **KEYWORD:** the following terms often lead to primary sources: autobiography, correspondence, diaries, interviews, letters, and personal narratives.

### What are Secondary Sources?

- According to Bowling Green State University, Library: "Secondary sources, on the other hand, offer an analysis or a restatement of primary sources. They often attempt to describe or explain primary sources. Some secondary sources not only analyze primary sources, but use them to argue a contention or to persuade the reader to hold a certain opinion."
- UCLA Institute on Primary Resources defines a secondary sources as "a work that interprets or analyzes an historical event or phenomenon."
- Ohio Historical Society states that a secondary source is a "source created by someone either not present when the event took place or removed by time from the event."

You can often find primary sources listed in the footnotes and bibliographies of secondary books and articles. One can view a secondary source as a summary, interpretation, or analysis of the primary source. They often attempt to describe or explain primary sources. Examples of secondary sources include textbooks and encyclopedias.

### Comparison:

Primary Sources	Secondary Sources
Original works of literature, art, music	Criticism of original work
Newspaper accounts of events, by someone on the scene	Newspaper editorial
Diary, autobiography, letters, oral testimony	Biography
Historical documents, such as laws or treaties	Historical commentary
Television show or motion picture	Review
Raw data from questionnaires	Social science article based on another's data
Observation/experiment	Scientific article based on another's experiment

### Sources

Bowling Green State University: Library instruction: Primary vs. secondary sources.  
<http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/assistance/page41012.html>  
 Quinnipiac University: Library Guides: Guide to resources on the Biological Sciences.  
<http://libraryguides.quinnipiac.edu/content.php?pid=21934&sid=238231>  
 Ohio Historical Society: Primary sources.  
<http://www.ohiohistoryteachers.org/02/04/index.shtml>  
 Sims Memorial Library: Primary vs. secondary sources.  
<http://www3.selu.edu/adunnington/ls102/privsec.html>  
 UC Berkeley Library: Library research: Finding primary sources.  
<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySources.html>  
 UCLA Institute on Primary Resources: What are primary resources?  
<http://ipr.ues.gseis.ucla.edu/info/definition.html>

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