

# Finding Primary Sources

Primary sources provide first-hand accounts or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation. They are created by witnesses or recorders who experienced the events or conditions being documented. Often these sources are created at the time when the events or conditions are occurring, but primary sources can also include autobiographies, memoirs, and oral histories recorded later.

Think about what types of primary sources might have been produced that would be relevant to your topic; think about which persons or organizations might have produced materials; also think about when this material may have produced. Some possible types of sources:

- Diaries, letters, journals, speeches, manuscripts, autobiographies, witness statements
- Accounts of the event, created after the event occurred, by people who did not participate or witness the event, but who used evidence from the time of the event (interviews, oral histories)
- Newspaper and magazine articles, and books, written around the time an event occurred.
- Articles containing original research, data, or findings never before shared
- Government documents (hearings and debates of legislative bodies; the official text of laws, regulations and treaties; records of government expenditures and finances; statistics; investigative reports; scientific data), maps
- Works of art, literature, and music (fine arts, photographs, fiction, musical scores, songs)
- Films, television shows, performance, plays
- Advertisements, cartoons, posters, banners
- Survey research (Census, public opinion, and market research data) and raw data that has been collected

Specific examples:

	Primary Source	Secondary Source
Literature	"Song of Myself" (Poem)	Journal article about the poem's historical importance
Psychology	Results of clinical trial to treat ADD by modifying diet	Book about ways to treat childhood ADD without drugs
Politics and Government	U.S. Census Statistics	Book about suburban population changes in U.S.
History	Recorded interview with Choctaw American Indian	Journal article about Native Americans who served in WWII
Social Science	<i>Diary of Anne Frank</i>	Book about diaries kept during the Holocaust
Art	Photographs by Diane Arbus	Magazine article about 20th century female photographers

\*Taken from Borough of Manhattan Community College Library <http://lib1.bmcc.cuny.edu/help/sources.html>

## Newspaper and Magazine Articles from the Time Period You're Writing About

- **New York Times Historical, 1851-2007** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/ProQuest\\_Historical\\_Newspapers\\_The\\_New\\_York\\_Times/](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/ProQuest_Historical_Newspapers_The_New_York_Times/)) Full-text articles from the *New York Times*.
- **San Francisco Chronicle, 1865-1922** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/ProQuest\\_Historical\\_Newspapers\\_The\\_San\\_Francisco\\_Chronicle](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/ProQuest_Historical_Newspapers_The_San_Francisco_Chronicle)) Full-text articles from the *San Francisco Chronicle*.
- **LexisNexis Academic** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/LexisNexis\\_Academic](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/LexisNexis_Academic)) Current articles from national and regional newspapers, wire services, broadcast transcripts, international news; U.S. Federal and state case law, codes, and regulations.
- **Newspaper Source** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/Newspaper\\_Source](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/Newspaper_Source)) Current articles from more than 40 national and international newspapers including *USA Today*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Washington Post*, and *The Times (London)*.

## Original Research Articles

- **JSTOR** (<http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/JSTOR>) Full-text scholarly journal articles dating as far back as 1665.
- **ProQuest** (<http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/ProQuest>) Interdisciplinary database containing current newspaper, magazine, and journal articles. Search on your topic and click on the **Scholarly Journals** tab.

Also search for articles in subject-specific library databases (e.g., Nursing & Health Sciences, Psychology, etc.): [http://www.usfca.edu/Library/research/Start\\_Your\\_Research/](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/research/Start_Your_Research/)

## Historical E-books

- **Early English Books Online** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/EEBO\\_Early\\_English\\_Books\\_Online](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/EEBO_Early_English_Books_Online)) Contains digital facsimile page images of virtually every work printed in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and British North America and works in English printed elsewhere from 1473-1700.
- **Eighteenth Century Collections Online** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/Eighteenth\\_Century\\_Collections\\_Online](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/Eighteenth_Century_Collections_Online)) Digital images of every page of 150,000 books published during the 18th century.

## Memoirs, Letters, Interviews, Autobiographies, Diaries, Manuscripts, and Speeches

Under **Books** on the library's home page, enter your keyword(s) and add one of the following keywords from the list below.

For example: *japanese relocation and personal narratives*

- Biography
- Autobiography
- Correspondence
- Diaries
- Imprints
- Interviews
- Manuscripts
- Oratory
- Personal narratives
- Sources
- Speeches

## Video and Audio Recordings

- Under **Books** on the library's home page, search by title of video or audio recording.
- If you have a topic:
  - Enter **keywords** that describe your topic
  - Under Format on the left, select **Videos** (or **Spoken Record** or **Sound Record**)

If the library doesn't have a video or audio recording you're looking for, try searching for it at the San Francisco Public Library (<http://www.sfpl.org/>). For videos, try your local video store or LeVideo (<http://www.levideo.com>) in the Inner Sunset.

## U.S. State and Federal Government Documents

- Search **Books** for selected documents
  - Enter **keywords** that describe your topic
  - Under Location on the left, select **Government Document Stacks**
- **Catalog of U.S. Government Publications** (<http://catalog.gpo.gov:80/F?RN=319721443>) Finding tool for federal publications that includes descriptive records for historical and current publications and provides direct links to those that are available online.
- **Google: U.S. Government Search** (<http://www.google.com/unclesam>)

For other search tools, see the library's Government Information site for U.S. documents: [http://www.usfca.edu/Library/govdocs/United\\_States/](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/govdocs/United_States/)

## Congressional Information

- **LexisNexis Congressional** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/LexisNexis\\_Congressional](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/LexisNexis_Congressional)) Includes the full text of Congressional reports, documents, prints, bills, the Congressional Record, and selected testimony in hearings before Congress, Public laws, Statutes at Large, the Federal Register, and the Code of Federal Regulations.
- **THOMAS** (<http://thomas.loc.gov>) Useful for tracking legislation in Congress, performing legislative histories and locating recent Congressional documents in full-text. Legislation and Committee Reports are available from 1994 to the present.

## Statistics

- **Statistical Abstract of the United States** (<http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/>) Current statistics on social and economic conditions in the United States. Copy of the latest edition available at the Reference Desk.
- **FedStats** (<http://www.fedstats.gov/>) Statistics on all topics from U.S. government agencies.
- **American Factfinder**. U.S. Census Bureau (<http://factfinder.census.gov/>) Easy to access data about individual communities, the economy, and society.
- **ProQuest Statistical Insight** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/Proquest\\_Statistical\\_Insight](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/Proquest_Statistical_Insight)) Tables and abstracts for publications for U.S. and international statistics.
- **Historical Statistics of the United States** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/Historical\\_Statistics\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_States/](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/Historical_Statistics_of_the_United_States/)) Statistical tables covering population, work and welfare, economic structure and performance, economic sectors, and governance and international relations mostly from 1790-1990.

## Public Opinion

- **Polling Report** (<http://www.pollingreport.com/>) The results of the latest surveys (by polling organizations such as Gallup, Harris, and Princeton Survey Research Associates) on health care, taxation, welfare, education, environmental policy, and other major issues.
- **Gallup.com** (<http://www.gallup.com>) Offers some free public opinion data on key domestic issues. Free on-campus only trial to pre-1997 data at <http://institution.gallup.com> until May 1.
- **Roper Center** (<http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/>) Selected data on US elections, presidential approval, social issues, economic policies, international affairs, and health. Look under "Data Access" in the top menu.

See [http://www.usfca.edu/Library/research/publicpolicy/Public\\_Policy\\_Public\\_Opinion\\_Sources/](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/research/publicpolicy/Public_Policy_Public_Opinion_Sources/) for more sources.

## Photographs and Illustrations

Search for books containing photographs and illustrations. In an individual book's record, click **More info** and look for **ill.** (illustrations) in the **Descript** field. Also try searching using the keyword **pictorial works**.

- **AP Images** ([http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/AP\\_Images](http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/AP_Images)) Photo archive covering all news subjects dating back to 1840.
- **San Francisco Historical Photograph Collection** (<http://sflib1.sfpl.org:82/>) Photographs from the San Francisco Public Library's Historical Collection.
- **ArtStor** (<http://www.usfca.edu/Library/databases/ARTstor>) Digital library of approximately 700,000 images in the areas of art, architecture, the humanities, and social sciences.

## Websites of Primary Sources

- **American Memory** (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>) Free access to written and spoken words, sound recordings, still and moving images, prints, maps, and sheet music that document the American experience.
- **Calisphere** (<http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/>) Free access to over 150,000 digital images on the history and culture of California.
- **Avalon Project** (<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/default.asp>) Full-text documents in law, history, and diplomacy from pre-18<sup>th</sup> century to the present.
- **EuroDocs: Online Sources for European History** ([http://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Main_Page)) Selected primary source transcriptions, facsimiles and translations.
- **Free Online Book Repositories** (<http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/archives.html>)