

WHAT COUNTS AS A PRIMARY SOURCE?

Diaries, journals, speeches, interviews, letters, memos, manuscripts and other papers in which individuals describe events in which they were participants or observers.

Published materials (books, magazine and journal articles, newspaper articles) written at the time about a particular event. While these are sometimes accounts by participants, in most cases journalists or other observers write them. The important thing is to distinguish between material written at the time of an event as a kind of report, and material written much later, as historical analysis.

Memoirs & Autobiographies These are generally less reliable since they are usually written long after events occurred and may be distorted by bias, dimming memory or the revised perspective that may come with hindsight. On the other hand, they are sometimes the only source for certain information.

Records of organizations and agencies of government The minutes, reports, correspondence, etc. of an organization or agency serve as an ongoing record of the activity and thinking of that organization or agency. Many kinds of records (births, deaths, marriages; permits and licenses issued; census data; etc.) document conditions in the society.

Photographs, audio recordings and moving pictures or video recordings, documenting what happened.

Artifacts Physical objects, buildings, furniture, tools, appliances and household items, clothing, toys.

Research reports in the sciences and social sciences Especially for recent social history, the best evidence of broad developments in society is often in the form of social science surveys or research studies. This research is generally reported in book form, government reports or most commonly in articles published in scholarly journals.

FINDING PRIMARY SOURCES: WHERE TO START

Encyclopedias, Chronologies, Short Biographies: These sources will contain dates, key people, names, and movements.

Subject Bibliographies: These works contain citations for a particular subject. They often contain a section of primary sources of the type listed above.

Works Cited: Scholars must use primary sources. Scan the works cited pages of pertinent materials and note what primary sources they use.

FINDING BOOKS: UCO, STATEWIDE, NATIONALLY, AND INTERNATIONALLY

Chambers Library has access to several resources for finding books, manuscripts, and other primary source material. Access the following primary searching tool using the Chambers Library website under Search Library Catalogs:

Source	Contents
Chambers Library Catalog (http://librarycatalog.uco.edu)	Books and other materials owned by Chambers Library
<i>WorldCat</i> (http://library.uco.edu/cats)	Books and other materials held in libraries worldwide

FINDING PRIMARY SOURCES BY KEYWORD: EASIEST METHOD

The following words in a record often indicate a possible primary source:

Correspondence	Diaries
Early works to 1800	Interviews
Pamphlets	Periodicals
Personal narratives	Sources

Connecting these words with other pertinent keywords retrieves primary sources. For example:

civil war and correspondence	Retrieves collections of Civil War letters
russia and revolution and personal narratives	Retrieves narratives from the Russian Revolution
vietnam war and diaries	Retrieves diaries from the Vietnam era
vietnam war and (diaries or correspondence)	Retrieves diaries or letters from this period

FINDING PRIMARY SOURCES BY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SUBJECT HEADINGS (LCSH)

In order to use the catalogs to find primary sources by subject, you must first identify the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). LC Subject Headings are standardized terms developed by the Library of Congress to describe materials listed in catalogs. The simplest method is to:

1. Do a keyword search similar to those above

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2. Look the subject headings of a pertinent record
3. Do a subject search based on the subject headings listed, or click on a pertinent heading

NOTE: The proper subject heading assigned to a book is not necessarily intuitive or logical. For instance, the LCSH for the Vietnam War is NOT "Vietnam War" but rather "Vietnamese conflict, 1961-1975."

Once you have identified the appropriate Library of Congress Subject Heading, pair that heading with specific subheadings that identify materials as primary sources. For example:

- world war-1939-1945-Japan,
- student movements—Japan--sources
- France--History--Revolution, 1789-1799--Sources.
- Soviet Union—History—revolution, 1917-1921--pamphlets
- women suffrage--united states--sources

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Many Libraries have special collections and archives containing pertinent material. The UCO Archive, for instance, contains memorabilia related to the campus and to Edmond. Search collections either using the library's local catalog, or with the Oklahoma Department of Libraries (www.odl.state.ok.us/weblinks.htm).

FINDING CONTEMPORARY ARTICLES IN PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS

Chambers Library holds several indexes for retrieving historical information. Ask a librarian if you need assistance using these resources.

Title	Date	Location
<i>American Periodical Series</i>	1741–1900	4 th Floor Microforms – Index shelved at the Current Periodicals Counter
Index to the <i>Times</i> (London)	1914-1957	4 th Floor Newspaper Area
<i>International Index to Periodicals</i>	1907-1955	Reference AI3. I58x
<i>New York Times</i> Index	1851-Present	4 th Floor Newspaper Area (Also available via Proquest, full text, http://library.uco.edu/databases)
<i>Nineteenth Century Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature</i>	1890-1899	AI3 .R47
Palmer's index to the <i>Times</i> newspaper	1790-1905	4 th Floor Newspaper Area
<i>Poole's Index to Periodical Literature</i>	1802-1906	Reference AI3 .P7

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<i>Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature</i>	1900- Present	Reference Indexes AI3 .R48
<i>Readers' Guide Retro</i>	1890-1982	Library Database (http://library.uco.edu/databases)

DOCUMENTING ATTITUDES OR THE MENTALITY OF A TIME

Try public opinion polls from the time period. These are generally very limited in availability and in what they reveal. Also, ideas conveyed in mass media, literature, film, popular fiction, self-help literature, textbooks, etc. may also be useful. The point is to use these sources, written or produced at the time, as evidence of how people were thinking.

PRIMARY SOURCES ON THE WEB

American Memory

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

From the Library of Congress, the American Memory project is a collection of digitized documents, photographs, recorded sound, moving pictures and text from the Library of Congress Americana collections. There are over 100 collections included in the project. Go to the American Memory website and search a particular topic or browse through the collections.

The New American Studies Web: Resources

<https://lamp.georgetown.edu/asw/>

An extensive list of links to historical studies, archival, and general history resources in the field of American history.

Edsitement

http://edsitement.neh.gov/websites_all.asp

The National Endowment for the Humanities maintains this site with links to the best history, language arts, and social sciences sites. In addition to primary sources, there are online lesson plans and other digital learning materials.

Digital Text Collections (Berkeley Digital Library SunSITE)

<http://Sunsite.berkeley.edu/Collections/>

Links to digital text collections available on the Web. Subject areas include history, literature, philosophy and music.

PRIMARY SOURCE COLLECTIONS

Ad*Access

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<http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/adaccess/>

A collection of images from over 7,000 advertisements printed in U.S. and Canadian newspapers and magazines from 1911 through 1955. Subject areas include: radio, television, transportation, beauty and hygiene and World War II.

The American Civil War Homepage

<http://sunsite.utk.edu/civil-war>

A general site on the American Civil War that includes links to images and photographs from the Civil War as well as links to important Civil War documents.

American Radicalism

<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/collections/index.cfm?CollectionID=1>

An online collection of digital texts and images from the American Radicalism collection at Michigan State University. Among the many subject areas included are the Hollywood Ten, Black Panthers, Birth Control, I.W.W., Wounded Knee, and Students for a Democratic Society.

Documenting the American South

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/>

Sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, this is an electronic collection that provides access to digitized primary materials that offer Southern perspectives on American history and culture. Fourteen different projects make up the site, including: Southern literature; first-person narratives; slave narratives; the Southern Homefront, 1861-1865; the church in the Southern Black Community.

History Matters

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/>

More than 144 first person narratives of average Americans in extraordinary times. Strong in the WWI period. A project of the Center for Social History and the New Media, and George Mason University. Also includes lesson plans and teacher resources in US History.

Making of America

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/> University of Michigan

<http://dlxs2.library.cornell.edu/m/moa/> Cornell University

(collections overlap but are not identical)

A collection of over 1,900 full-text books and 100,000 journal articles from the antebellum period through reconstruction.

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

<http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/index.html>

Search the Archival Research Catalog to find online images of many NARA documents. Very strong in 20th century pictures and documents on US themes.

The New York Public Library Digital Library Collection

<http://www.nypl.org/collections/nypl-collections/archival-materials>

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In addition to finding aids (guides to archival and manuscript collections), the NYPL Digital Library Collections contains texts and images from the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

US Historical Documents Online

<http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/> from the University of Oklahoma Law School, and the Avalon Project <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/default.asp> at Yale Law School.

These sources are mostly government documents, and several collections are available from various universities. Examples include: A Chronology of US Historical Documents.

The Valley of the Shadow: Living the Civil War in Pennsylvania and Virginia

<http://valley.lib.virginia.edu/>

A project that interweaves the histories of two communities on either side of the Mason-Dixon line during the era of the American Civil War. It incorporates a narrative and electronic archive of the sources on which the narrative is based.

World War II Resources

<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/>

Primary source materials on all aspects of the war.

Internet Library of Early Journals

<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej/>

A joint project of the Universities of Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, and Oxford to digitize substantial runs of 18th and 19th century journals.

STRATEGIES FOR FINDING PRIMARY SOURCES

This handout was modified from the Library Research Using Primary Sources handout at the University of California Berkeley Library:

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/instruct/guides/primarysources.html>