Primary and Secondary Sources

DEFINITIONS

PRIMARY: A Record of events, artifacts, creative art or set of data that has not been evaluated. Anything firsthand at the time.

SECONDARY: Anything that offers interpretation, analysis, criticism, evaluation or opinion on primary sources.

The chart below illustrates possible uses of primary and secondary sources by discipline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Primary Source</th>
<th>Secondary Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>original research results and methodology</td>
<td>Book or article analyzing original research and comparing it to other research conducted in the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>sketch book</td>
<td>conference proceedings on French Impressionists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Emancipation Proclamation (1863)</td>
<td>book on the anti-slavery struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
<td>interview</td>
<td>biography of publisher Randolph Hearst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>legislative hearing</td>
<td>law review article on anti-terrorism legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>novel</td>
<td>literary criticism on Desolation Angels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>score of an opera</td>
<td>biography of the composer Mozart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>public opinion poll</td>
<td>newspaper article on campaign finance reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td>speech</td>
<td>editorial comment on Martin Luther King's &quot;I Have a Dream&quot; speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>voter registry</td>
<td>Ph.D. dissertation on Hispanic voting patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>crime scene photograph/ letter from killer in prison</td>
<td>manual of forensic science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>chart of annual profits and losses</td>
<td>journal article discussing Microsoft's success at the end of the year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### EXAMPLES OF PRIMARY SOURCES

- Autobiography
- Personal Letters
- Travel Description
- Short Stories
- Interviews
- Novels
- Diaries
- Experiment Notes
- Field Notes
- Case Studies
- Paintings
- Sculpture
- Transcripts
- Raw Data
- Polls
- Poetry
- Scripture
- Musical Scores
- Statistics
- Formulas
- Maps

Also:

- personal correspondence and diaries
- works of art and literature
- speeches and oral histories
- audio and video recordings
- photographs and posters
- newspaper ads
- laws and legislative hearings
- census or demographic records
- plant and animal specimens
- coins and tools

### EXAMPLES OF SECONDARY SOURCES

- Biography
- History
- Interpretation
- Opinion
- Commentary
- Policy
- Criticism
- Comparisons
- Analysis
- Reports
- Reviews
- Lesson Plans
- Studies
- Textbooks
- ‘Conference-Proceedings’
- Encyclopedias
- Dictionaries

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