

Primary and secondary sources

MANJUNATHA.N
Library assistant
sri siddhartha first grade college tumkur

Primary sources provide a first-hand account of an event or time period and are considered to be authoritative. They represent original thinking, reports on discoveries or events, or they can share new information. Often these sources are created at the time the events occurred but they can also include sources that are created later. They are usually the first formal appearance of original research.

Secondary sources involve analysis, synthesis, interpretation, or evaluation of primary sources. They often attempt to describe or explain primary sources.

Scholarly journals, although generally considered to be secondary sources, often contain articles on very specific subjects and may be the primary source of information on new developments.

Primary and secondary categories are often not fixed and depend on the study or research you are undertaking. For example, newspaper editorial/opinion pieces can be both primary and secondary. If exploring how an event affected people at a certain time, this type of source would be considered a primary source. If exploring the event, then the opinion piece would be responding to the event and therefore is considered to be a secondary source.

Primary sources

Examples of primary resources include:

- diaries, correspondence, ships' logs
- original documents e.g. birth certificates, trial transcripts
- biographies, autobiographies, manuscripts
- interviews, speeches, oral histories
- case law, legislation, regulations, constitutions
- government documents, statistical data, research reports
- a journal article reporting NEW research or findings
- creative art works, literature
- newspaper advertisements and reportage and editorial/opinion pieces

Primary sources can be found using:

- [Library collection](#)
- [Primary sources for history](#) subject guide

Secondary sources

Secondary sources offer an analysis, interpretation or a restatement of primary sources and are considered to be persuasive. They often involve generalisation, synthesis, interpretation, commentary or evaluation in an attempt to convince the reader of the creator's argument. They often attempt to describe or explain primary sources.

Examples of secondary sources include:

- journal articles that comment on or analyse research
- textbooks
- dictionaries and encyclopaedias
- books that interpret, analyse
- political commentary
- biographies
- dissertations
- newspaper editorial/opinion pieces
- criticism of literature, art works or music

Primary Sources

Primary resources contain first-hand information, meaning that you are reading the author's own account on a specific topic or event that s/he participated in. Examples of primary resources include scholarly research articles, books, and diaries. Primary sources such as research articles often do not explain terminology and theoretical principles in detail. Thus, readers of primary scholarly research should have foundational knowledge of the subject area. Use primary resources to obtain a first-hand account to an actual event and identify original research done in a field. For many of your papers, use of primary resources will be a requirement.

Examples of a *primary source* are:

- Original documents such as diaries, speeches, manuscripts, letters, interviews, records, eyewitness accounts, autobiographies
- Empirical scholarly works such as research articles, clinical reports, case studies, dissertations
- Creative works such as poetry, music, video, photography

How to locate *primary research* in NCU Library:

1. From the Library's homepage, begin your search in Roadrunner Search or select a subject-specific database from the [A-Z Databases](#).
2. Use the Scholarly/Peer-Reviewed Journal limiter to narrow your search to journal articles.
3. Once you have a set of search results, remember to look for articles where the author has conducted original research. A primary research article will include a literature review, methodology, population or set sample, test or measurement, discussion of findings and usually future research directions.

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources describe, summarize, or discuss information or details originally presented in another source; meaning the author, in most cases, did not participate in the event. This type of source is written for a broad audience and will include definitions of discipline specific terms, history relating to the topic, significant theories and principles, and summaries of major studies/events as related to the topic. Use secondary sources to obtain an overview of a topic and/or identify primary resources. Refrain from including such resources in an annotated bibliography for doctoral level work unless there is a good reason.

Examples of a *secondary source* are:

- Publications such as textbooks, magazine articles, book reviews, commentaries, encyclopedias, almanacs

Locate *secondary resources* in NCU Library within the following databases:

- Annual Reviews (scholarly article reviews)
- Credo Reference (encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks & more)
- Ebook Central (ebooks)
- ProQuest (book reviews, bibliographies, literature reviews & more)
- SAGE Reference Methods, SAGE Knowledge & SAGE Navigator (handbooks, encyclopedias, major works, debates & more)
- Most other Library databases include secondary sources.