

# Primary and Secondary Resources

## Primary Resources

Primary sources are original materials on which other research is based. These sources include documents such as poems, diaries, court records, interviews, surveys, and fieldwork. Primary sources also include research results generated by experiments that are usually published in academic and research journals. Data, such as statistics which have been tabulated but not interpreted, are also considered a primary source.

Some examples of primary sources:

- Scientific journal articles, reporting experimental research results
- Proceedings of meetings
- Technical reports
- Sets of data
- Works of literature
- Diaries
- Autobiographies
- Interviews, surveys and fieldwork
- Letters and correspondence
- Speeches
- Government documents
- Photographs and works of art
- Original documents (birth certificates, transcripts)

## Secondary Resources

Secondary sources describe, interpret, analyze and evaluate primary sources or they comment on and discuss the evidence provided by primary resources. Secondary sources are works that are one or more steps removed from an event. They refer to original information and have been written after the fact with the benefit of hindsight. In science secondary sources are those which simplify the process of finding and evaluating primary literature. They tend to be works that repackage, reorganize, reinterpret, summarize, index or otherwise “add value” to the new information reported in the primary literature.

Some examples of secondary sources:

- Bibliographies
- Biographical works
- Commentaries
- Dictionaries and encyclopedias
- Handbooks and data compilations
- History
- Works of criticism and interpretation
- Indexing and abstracting tools
- Newspaper and popular magazine articles
- Journal articles-particularly in disciplines other than science

	Primary Resources	Secondary Resources
<i>Sciences</i>	Findings from tests and experiments, observations, discoveries, original research...	Interpretations and discussions of test data as found in journals and books
<i>Literature</i>	Novels, poems, plays, short stories, letters, diaries, manuscripts, autobiographies	Journal articles, reviews, biographies, criticism about writers and books
<i>Social Sciences</i>	Case studies, surveys and questionnaires, original research and reports	Commentary and evaluation in reports, documents, journal articles and books
<i>Government, Political Science, History</i>	Speeches, original writings, documents, government reports	Newspaper reports, news magazines, journal articles, newsletters and books
<i>Fine Arts</i>	Films, paintings, music, sculptures, photographs...original works of art	Evaluations in journal articles, critical reviews, biographies and critical books about the artists and their works