

Bailey/Howe Library Information & Instruction Services

TYPES OF INFORMATION

PRIMARY SOURCES

Original writings by an author (speeches, manuscripts, diaries, articles, etc.), newspaper articles, documents, artifacts, photographs, creative works, statistics, laboratory or field experiments, or other data which provide firsthand information.

They:

- Present information in its original form, neither interpreted nor condensed nor evaluated by other writers.
- Present first hand or contemporary accounts of events.
- Are original materials on which other research is based.
- Present original thinking. Report on discoveries. Share new information.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Materials which: Describe. Interpret. Analyze. Summarize. They evaluate or analyze information in primary resources or other secondary resources. Sources presenting facts or descriptions about events are secondary unless they are based on direct participation or observation.

Types of sources:

- Books on a single subject or an aspect of a subject.
- Journal Articles.
- Magazine Articles.
- Newspaper Articles (when written outside the time period of an event).

TERTIARY SOURCES

Materials in which the information from secondary sources has been "digested," (put it into a convenient, easy-to-read form). They rarely contain original material.

Types of sources:

- Encyclopedias. Dictionaries. Textbooks. Find facts. Get background on/an overview of a subject.
- Critical Reviews. Used to judge/evaluate known sources, e.g., book reviews.
- Bibliographies (entire books listing sources on a subject; lists of citations to journals and books at the end of a book, book chapter, or journal article) to locate books, articles, and other sources on a topic.
- Indexes/Abstracts - online (i.e., article databases) or print. Use to locate sources of secondary information.