

Sources of Information

Sources of information may be defined as 'Primary' or 'Secondary'.

Primary Sources

Primary sources are usually original 'records' which have been created at a certain time for a specific reason. Such sources are the 'raw material', 'firsthand information' or 'original thinking' relevant to an event.

Examples of Primary Sources

- Letters/E-mail
- Photographs/Paintings
- Diaries/Journals
- Speeches
- Interviews
- Recordings
- Newspaper/Magazine article written at time of event
- Autobiographies
- Descriptions of travel diaries
- Literary works- Novels, Plays and Poetry
- Musical lyrics
- Music & Video recordings
- Essays/Dissertation
- Vital Records
- Diplomatic records

Secondary Sources

Secondary sources are based on primary sources - they are usually studies which analyse, evaluate, interpret, or criticize primary sources. They can also be accounts of events which were created well after the event occurred. By assessing, repackaging and distributing information, secondary sources make the information more accessible.

Examples of Secondary Sources

- Articles in newspapers and magazines
- Book/Movie reviews
- Articles that address someone else's original research in journals or books.
- Any form of criticism or analysis of other work/issues in speech or writing
- Secondary sources are "second-hand information". For example, if I tell you something, I am your primary source. If you tell someone else what I told you, you are a secondary source.

Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources.

The distinction between primary and secondary sources is not always clear. You cannot always determine if a record is primary or secondary just by its source. It is more how a source is used, rather than its type, which determines to which category it belongs.

Example

An interview in *NME Magazine* with The Killers would be a primary source, but a review in *NME Magazine* of The Killers latest album would be a secondary source.

Other Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary	Secondary
Autobiographies Correspondence Descriptions of travel diaries Literary works Interviews Personal narratives Paintings and photographs	Biographies Prior books & papers on a topic Literary criticism & interpretation History & historical criticism Political analyses Reviews of law and legislation Essays on morals and ethics Analysis of social policy Study and teaching material