

Lesson 18 (Part 2). Researching Skills and Tips

HAND OUT

As we reviewed when discussing research skills, primary and secondary sources are an important consideration of the research process. But, what are they, and why do they matter?

Activity: Primary and Secondary Sources

What are primary sources? What are secondary sources?

In what ways can we use primary and secondary sources to support our own arguments?

According to the library at Yale University (2008), "Primary sources provide first-hand testimony or direct evidence concerning a topic under investigation. They are created by witnesses or recorders who experienced the events or conditions being documented."

It is important to carefully analyze the source as a reader and as a writer to provide context for your source so that you are presenting the ideas accurately, as some primary sources are less reliable than others. Finding a balance with sharing different types of sources is essential to develop a sound argument.

Also, you are collecting your own original source data through research methods that might include conducting a study, survey, or interview or even ethnographic observations. In a sense, you are the person responsible for witnesses, recording experiences, and data. Secondary sources are sources that others have composed based on their research. These sources are an analysis of other research or a compilation of ideas about society. Additionally, many database articles that focus on analysis of other research are secondary sources, which are essential to back up your ideas and build credibility.

Review the following sites to further explore the role of primary and secondary sources:

- Yale University, "What Are Primary Sources?" (www.yale.edu/collections_collaborative/primarysources/primarysources.html)
- Borough of Manhattan Community College, "Primary vs. Secondary Sources" (<http://lib1.bmcc.cuny.edu/help/sources.html>)

Based on our study of various texts, here are a few original, primary, and secondary sources.

Your Original Research	Primary Sources We've Explored	Secondary Sources We've Explored
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your own surveys and interviews• Your original blog posts• Your culture collage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TED Talks or commercials• Data sets• Literature circle book	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articles or presentations that analyze or report on existing data• Book reviews

What additional primary and secondary sources have you gathered so far? What else do you need to gather? What keywords and topics will you search for?

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