

CHOOSING SOURCES

When you are writing a paper that involves research, it is important to realize that there are two different types of sources: primary and secondary.

PRIMARY SOURCES

A primary source provides firsthand information or ideas. Using a primary source is like getting to talk to the author in person.

These could include:

- ✓ An author's original artistic work
- ✓ An author's own discussion of an issue or topic
- ✓ An author's presentation of his/her experiment and results

How are primary sources useful?

- ✓ They give you a chance to look at a work firsthand.
- ✓ They give you an opportunity to develop your own ideas, make your own interpretations, and analyze another's work.
- ✓ They provide a means of checking the accuracy of information given in secondary sources.

Where can I find them??

LOOK IN THE LIBRARY!!

All you have to do is look up your author or topic in the catalogue or in periodical indexes.

SECONDARY SOURCES

A secondary source provides a scholar's, expert's, or researcher's interpretation or criticism of *another* author's work or ideas.

These could include:

- ✓ Literary criticism
- ✓ Books or articles that analyze another author's ideas
- ✓ Books or articles in which the author interprets another author's work

How are secondary sources useful?

- ✓ They can provide an "expert" opinion or viewpoint on the subject.
- ✓ They can give you new perspectives and insights on the primary source.
- ✓ They can show how the existing field regards the primary source.
- ✓ They can provide a variety of opinions upon which to base your own judgement.

Where can I find them??

Many secondary sources are available both in the library and on the Internet.

Advantages to using books and periodicals:

- ✓ Many older sources are easily available in books or printed periodicals.
- ✓ If you're having trouble locating material, there are trained librarians who can almost always help you find what you need.

Disadvantages to using the Internet:

- ✓ Many older sources are not available online.
- ✓ Often, the Internet provides only abstracts or summaries of articles, not the full text.

Advantages to using books and periodicals:

- ✓ There are a great many sources available at all times.
- ✓ Books can be checked out and taken home for later use.

Advantages to using the Internet:

- ✓ The Internet is a good way to find the most up-to-date sources.

Disadvantages to using the Internet:

- ✓ Not all resources available on the Internet are credible, legitimate sources.

EXAMPLES:

Primary Sources	Secondary Sources
Letters Diaries Autobiographies Memoirs	Histories Biographies
Novels Plays Short Stories Poems	Literary Criticism Book Reviews Books or articles that interpret or analyze
Essays Speeches Dictionaries Interviews	Books or articles that contain interpretations or reactions
Experiments and Data	Books or articles that evaluate the data and discuss the results
Paintings Movies/Films TV Shows	Reviews Commentaries