

**LIB101**  
**Assignment #8: Finding Primary Sources**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**The purpose of this assignment is to make you think about primary sources and to help you define and locate them for your subject area. Answers should be typewritten. You will be graded on citation style as well as on thoughtful answers. You do not need to use Special Collections, but you may if appropriate for your topic.**

**Part A (5 points)**

**E-mail** answers to Stephanie **and** Heather (smichel@oregon.uoregon.edu and hward@oregon.uoregon.edu) **\*\*\*Due by 2:00 p.m. Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>\*\*\***

1. What is your topic?
2. Read the definitions of primary resources on the next page.
3. Give examples of a primary source or sources for your topic. Explain why your examples fit the definition of a primary source.
4. Where would you look to find a primary source for your subject?

**Part B (5 points)**

Once Stephanie or Heather has replied to your e-mail for Part A, complete the following exercise. **\*\*\*Due by 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***

1. Find a primary source on your topic using your definition and any advice from Heather or Stephanie.
2. Cite your source using proper APA or MLA style. **Look in the style manuals** near the Reference Desk for help. (APA guide REF Knight BF76.7.P83 or MLA guide REF Knight LB2369.G53.)
3. Explain in two or three sentences **how and why** you might use this source for your research.
4. Staple this sheet to your answers.

## Primary Source Definitions

**The paragraphs below define primary sources for students of history, however they will be useful for any topic. Primary sources allow the researcher to draw their own conclusions about a subject instead of analyzing and interpreting it for them.**

...Primary sources enable the researcher to get as close as possible to the truth of what actually happened during an historical event or time period. Primary sources are the evidence left behind by participants or observers. Examples of primary sources include:

- Diaries, journals, speeches, interviews, letters, memos, manuscripts and other papers in which individuals describe events in which they were participants or observers;
- Memoirs and autobiographies;
- Records of organizations and agencies of government;
- Published materials written at the time of the event;
- Photographs, audio recordings, moving pictures, video recordings documenting what happened;
- Artifacts of all kinds; and
- Research reports in the sciences and social sciences.

A secondary source is a work that interprets or analyzes an historical event or phenomenon. Examples of secondary sources include textbooks and encyclopedias. The website provides tips for locating primary source material and offers an excellent bibliography. <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySources.html>

Taken from a web page at UCLA <http://ipr.ues.gseis.ucla.edu/info/definition.html>

**This paragraph describes both primary and secondary sources. You will find it helpful to know what a primary source is not when defining what it is.**

"By a '[primary] source' the historian means material that is contemporary to the events being examined. Such sources include, among other things, diaries, letters, newspapers, magazine articles, tape recordings, pictures, [videos] and maps. Such material may have appeared in print before, edited or unedited, and still be a source. The term is meant to be restrictive rather than inclusive, in that it attempts to indicate that **works of secondary scholarship, or synthesis, are not [primary] sources, since the data have been distilled by another person.** ... One good way for the novice historian to lose Brownie points among his serious-minded fellows is to call a biography of George Washington or an analysis of the Magna Charta a '[primary] source'." (Robin Winks, *The historian as detective: essays on evidence* New York: Harper & Row, 1969, p.xx)

Taken from a web page at Yale <http://www.library.yale.edu/ref/err/primdefs.htm>

