

Palomar College Library

Primary Sources*

What are they? Primary sources enable the researcher to get as close as possible to what actually happened during an historical event or time period. Primary sources were either created during the time period being studied, or were created at a later date by a participant in the events being studied (as in the case of memoirs) and they reflect the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer.

Primary sources may be in their original format or may have been reproduced at a later date in a different format, such as a book, microfilm collection, or video. These formats can be found by searching Palomar Library's *Catalog* <http://sirsi.palomar.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/x/0/0/49>. Primary sources also can be found via online periodical databases, or in print periodical indexes. Primary sources can also be found on the Internet.

For primary sources on the Internet, see *Palomar Library's Subject Link: History – Primary Sources* <http://www.palomar.edu/library/subjects/history.htm#primary>. For important advice on finding and evaluating primary sources on the Internet, see *Using Primary Sources on the Web* <http://www.lib.washington.edu/subject/History/RUSA> from the History Section of the Reference and User Services Association, a division of the American Library Association. Always feel free to ask for help at the Reference Desk.

TYPE OF PRIMARY SOURCE	SEARCH STRATEGY
Memoirs, letters, interviews, autobiographies, diaries	<p>If you have the name of a person, search the Palomar Library's <i>Catalog</i> http://sirsi.palomar.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/x/0/0/49 for that name under author (last name, first name). Search also by the person's name under subject as there may be primary source material in books by other people about the person.</p> <p>If you do not have the name of a person, search the <i>Catalog</i> http://sirsi.palomar.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/x/0/0/49 by subject and add an appropriate subheading to the subject such as: correspondence - diaries - interviews - personal narratives</p> <p>(ex: subject keywords: Japanese Americans interviews)</p>
Magazine or journal article from the time period you're writing about	<p>For recent online articles use an article database from <i>Palomar Library's Online Research Databases</i> http://www.palomar.edu/library/OnlineDatabases/databases.htm to locate the citations (title, author, name of periodical, date, volume, page numbers) of relevant articles. In many cases, the complete article will be available online. (An online exception as to age of articles is the JSTOR database which has many older articles.)</p> <p>In general, for articles older than 20 years, use print indexes such as <i>Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature</i> or <i>Poole's Index to Periodical Literature</i> on Index Table 1 at San Marcos. Palomar has some runs of bound magazines that go back through the last century and earlier.</p>
Newspaper article from the time period you're writing about - for a specific event or date	<p>For recent online newspaper articles, use an online newspaper index, from <i>Palomar Library's Online Research Databases</i> http://www.palomar.edu/library/OnlineDatabases/databases.htm web page under the category News.</p> <p>For older newspaper articles use a print newspaper index to locate the citations (title, author, name of the newspaper, date, volume, page numbers) of relevant articles. Two of Palomar Library's main print indexes located in the Reference area on the San Marcos Campus are <i>The New York Times Index</i> which goes back to 1851 and <i>The Times [London] Index</i> which goes back to 1785. Palomar has both of these newspapers, as well as others, on microfilm, so you can read and print the complete article.</p>

Records of materials published by an organization	Search the <i>Catalog</i> http://sirsi.palomar.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/x/0/0/49 by the name of the organization as author .
Speeches	<p>Search the <i>Catalog</i> http://sirsi.palomar.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/x/0/0/49 by author.</p> <p>Search an <i>Online Research Databases</i> http://www.palomar.edu/library/OnlineDatabases/databases.htm for periodical articles. Add a keyword speeches.</p> <p>The magazine, <i>Vital Speeches of the Day</i> contains only speeches on a variety of topics. Back issues in paper are shelved at Palomar Library, San Marcos campus. The magazine is also indexed by some of the general online databases listed in <i>Online Research Databases</i> http://www.palomar.edu/library/OnlineDatabases/databases.htm.</p> <p>For websites, click on <i>Palomar Library's Subject Link: History – Primary Sources</i> http://www.palomar.edu/library/subjects/history.htm#primary. Some of the websites listed will include speeches.</p>
Photographs	<p>Search the <i>Catalog</i> http://sirsi.palomar.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/x/0/0/49 by subject using a key word photographs.</p> <p>On the web, search <i>Google on Images</i> http://www.google.com/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi&q=</p>
Videos	Search the <i>Catalog</i> http://sirsi.palomar.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/x/0/0/49 by subject , title , or author . Add the word video . Palomar owns many documentary videos which include primary images and sounds of a subject. (ex. <u>Huey Long</u> . By Ken Burns. Prod. Ken Burns, Richard Kilberg. Florentine Films, PBS Home Video. 1996.)
Fiction from a particular time period	<p>Consult one of the following printed indexes and then consult the Library's <i>Catalog</i> http://sirsi.palomar.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/x/0/0/49 for the indicated book.</p> <p><i>Fiction Catalog</i> REF PN3451.W5</p> <p><i>Short Story Index</i> REF PS648.S5A1</p> <p><i>Play Index</i> REF PN1655.P53</p>

*Adapted 5/06 (sb) from UC Berkeley's *Library Guide: Library Research: Finding Primary Sources* <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySources.html#primary>