There are three types of sources used in historical research.

I. PRIMARY SOURCES
A primary source is a document or other sort of evidence written or created during the time under study. Primary sources offer an inside view of a particular event. Some types are:

• **Original Documents** (excerpts or translations acceptable): Diaries, speeches, letters, minutes, interviews, news film footage, autobiographies, official records

• **Creative Works**: Poetry, drama, novels, music, art

• **Relics or Artifacts**: jewelry, pottery, furniture, clothing, buildings

Examples of primary sources:

• *Diary of Anne Frank* – experiences of Jews in World War II

• *The Declaration of Independence* – U.S. history

• *Bible* – Hebrew customs in Bible times

• Arrowheads and pottery – American Indian history

• *Plato’s Republic* – women in ancient Greece

II. SECONDARY SOURCES
A secondary source interprets and analyzes primary sources. Secondary sources are one step removed from the event. Examples: a book about the effects of World War I, a journal article which interprets a scholar’s contribution in a field. Some types are: textbooks, journal articles, histories, criticism, commentaries, and encyclopedias.

III. FINDING SOURCES
Access tools such as periodical indexes, bibliographies, and online catalogs lead to primary or secondary sources. For example, the Library’s online catalog will find works BY Aristotle (primary source) or works ABOUT him (secondary source).

Find primary sources in the Library’s online catalog with the following **Boolean Keyword** searches:

• [subject] and (sources or documents)*

• [subject] and (source? or document?)* (catches some additional primary sources and a few irrelevant titles)

  e.g. “Great Britain” and (sources or documents)

*in addition to sources or documents, try: correspondence, trials, diaries, personal narratives