I. DEFINITIONS

WHAT ARE PRIMARY SOURCES?
Primary sources enable the researcher to get as close as possible to what actually happened during an historical event or time period. A primary source reflects the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer.

Undergraduates are sometimes allowed to use a broader definition of primary sources, which may include some of the types of materials listed below. If in doubt, ask your instructor.

- 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. These may be less reliable than diaries or letters since they are usually written long after events occurred and may be distorted by bias, dimming memory or the revised perspective that may come with hindsight. On the other hand, they are sometimes the only source for certain information.

- Records of or information collected by government agencies. Many kinds of records (births, deaths, marriages; permits and licences issued; census data; etc.) document conditions in the society.

- Records of organizations. The minutes, reports, correspondence, etc. of an organization or agency serve as an ongoing record of the activity and thinking of that organization or agency.

- Published materials (books, magazine and journal articles, newspaper articles) written at the time about a particular event. While these are sometimes accounts by participants, in most cases they are written by journalists or other observers. The important thing is to distinguish between material written at the time of an event as a kind of report, and material written much later, as historical analysis.

- Photographs, audio recordings and moving pictures or video recordings, documenting what happened.

- Materials that document the attitudes and popular thought of a historical time period. If you are attempting to find evidence documenting the mentality or psychology of a time, or of a group (evidence of a world view, a set of attitudes, or the popular understanding of an event or condition), the most obvious source is public opinion polls taken at the time. Since these are generally very limited in availability and in what they reveal, however, it is also possible to make use of ideas and images conveyed in the mass media, and even in literature, film, popular fiction, textbooks, etc. Again, the point is to use these sources, written or produced at the time, as evidence of how people were thinking.

- Research data such as anthropological field notes, the results of scientific experiments, and other scholarly activity of the time.

- Artifacts of all kinds: physical objects, buildings, furniture, tools, appliances and household items, clothing, toys.

REPRINTED PRIMARY SOURCES
Some primary sources, such as diaries or letters, are original manuscripts which exist in only one place in the world. Others, such as newspaper articles or transcripts of speeches, exist in multiple copies but may be hard to find.

Look for reprinted primary source materials that are available on campus, such as books that collect speeches, letters, or government documents; microfilm collections of the papers of an organization; or videos of archival newsreel footage. These materials are often more accessible and easier to use than the original materials. You can search for these primary sources in library catalogs using primary source subheadings (see III section 1, below).

Print: Some compilations of reprinted primary source materials appear in books which can often be found in reference collections, or which can be checked out from campus libraries:

- Documents of American History
- Speeches of the American Presidents
Microfilm: The Library maintains a rich microform collection of primary sources, all of which are accompanied by guides or indexes. These microform collections may be compilations of letters, manuscripts, and other documents on a particular topic. For a list of recent microform acquisitions see the library website for the History Collections at [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/Collections/History/](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/Collections/History/)

Among the types of collections you will find listed there are:
- Papers of the NAACP
- American Immigrant Autobiographies
- FBI Files on the American Indian Movement and Wounded Knee
- China Through Western Eyes
- Popular Newspapers During World War II

Videotapes: For documentary footage of historical events see the collections of the Media Resources Center (MRC) at [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC). To see whether the library has a videotape on a particular topic, go to a library catalog and limit your search by format. Example:

UCB Library Pathfinder
Search for: *vietnamese conflict*
Format: Films/videos/slides
Melvyl System via the Web:
Subject: *migrant labor united states*
Form: Videorecordings

You can also consult the many videographies compiled by the Media Resources Center and available on its website. The MRC Subject Videographies at [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/VideographyMenu.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/VideographyMenu.html) include lists with references to primary sources like propaganda films or the Clarence Thomas Confirmation Hearings. Some of those videographies are:
- Labor and Labor History
- Peace and Conflict in the 20th Century
- The 1960s
- History (includes various topics, such as U.S. History)

Also available in Media Resources Center is *The Visual Encyclopedia of the Twentieth Century*, a collection of moving picture images. Just as with the microform sets, the video segments are indexed in a separate guide. Another valuable primary resource is the March of Time series, a collection of newsreel clips on American life and world events from 1938 through 1955.

Internet: Increasingly, libraries are digitizing archival resources and providing access to these special collections through the Web. Many digital library collections contain excellent primary resources such as photographs, scanned images of letters or the full-text of books and journals.

For a selective list of primary sources on the Web, go to [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySourcesOnTheWeb.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySourcesOnTheWeb.html)

WHAT ARE SECONDARY SOURCES?
A secondary source is a work that interprets or analyzes an historical event or phenomenon. It is generally at least one step removed from the event. A recent article that evaluates and analyzes the relationship between the feminist movement and the labor movement in turn-of-the-century England is an example of a secondary source; if you were to look at the bibliography of this article you would see that the author's research was based on both primary sources such as labor union documents, speeches and personal letters as well as other secondary sources. Textbooks and encyclopedias are also examples of secondary sources.

To find secondary sources, look in the library catalogs (for books and other monographs) or periodical indexes such as *Historical Abstracts or America: History & Life*, both at [http://sb1.abc-clio.com](http://sb1.abc-clio.com)
II. GETTING STARTED: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. FIND THE RIGHT REFERENCE SOURCE

A good first step in finding primary materials is to look at the resources in the library's reference collection. These sources will give you a good overview of the topic, will outline the basic historical context and will help you identify key participants, dates and publications associated with your topic.

Ask a librarian or professor to suggest reference sources or textbooks, such as specialized encyclopedias, chronologies or factbooks which will give you an historical overview of a topic or event and identify the participants. If you have specific people in mind already, biographical dictionaries and encyclopedias will give you background information and bibliographies of primary and secondary sources.

Books and historical journal articles (especially those with extensive bibliographies) and other secondary sources can give you background information and clues as to the participants involved and source materials which might be available.

Specialized bibliographies and guides to research often give both an introductory overview of how to go about researching a particular topic as well as list specific primary and secondary sources.

Examples of specialized encyclopedias, chronologies and handbooks:
- Historical Dictionary of the French Revolution
- Encyclopedia of Asian History
- Encyclopedia of the Holocaust

Examples of biographical sources:
- Current Biography (1940-present)
- Dictionary of American Biography

Examples of bibliographies and guides to research:
- Guide to Sources in Medieval History
- A Guide to Sources of British Military History
- Modern China: 1840-1972: An Introduction to Sources and Research Aids

2. IDENTIFY KEY PARTICIPANTS, DATES AND PUBLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR TOPIC

When looking at reference sources, pick out names of people, organizations, and governmental agencies that were participants, and any publications such as reports, newsletters, magazines, pamphlets, etc. that they produced in conjunction with the events or developments you are researching. Search for these names and titles in the library catalogs (see section III 1. below, ÔUse the Online Library CatalogsÔ).

III. STRATEGIES FOR FINDING PRIMARY SOURCES

Use library catalogs to find books, videos, manuscript materials and the locations of newspaper and journal titles. To find individual newspaper and magazine articles, see Indexes, below.

1. USE THE ONLINE LIBRARY CATALOGS

The online library catalogs at UCB are:
- Web-based catalogs:
  - UCB Library Pathfinder at [http://pathfinder.berkeley.edu](http://pathfinder.berkeley.edu)
    - For access to materials in the UCB Libraries: includes sophisticated search capabilities like limiting by language and format or combining subject headings. Also allows users to send search results to their email addresses.
  - California Digital Library (CDL) at [http://www.dbs.cdlib.org/](http://www.dbs.cdlib.org/)
    - The catalog of all nine UC campuses. Allows limiting by language and format, combining subject headings, and sending search results by e-mail.

- Telnet versions of the catalogs, which use a command-line interface are
  - GLADIS at [telnet://gladis.berkeley.edu](telnet://gladis.berkeley.edu) for UC Berkeley holdings only, and
  - CDL/Melvyl at [telnet://melvyl.ucop.edu](telnet://melvyl.ucop.edu) which contains the catalog for all nine UC campuses.
A. Search by subject (Library of Congress Subject Headings)

In order to use the library catalogs to find primary sources on a subject, you must first identify the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH). LC Subject Headings are standardized terms developed by the Library of Congress to describe materials listed in catalogs. To determine the appropriate subject headings associated with your topic you can:

- Ask a librarian.
- Look in the four red volumes of the Library of Congress Subject Headings book located near the reference desk in most libraries.
- Look up the catalog record for a book that you already know about, display the record in long format and then do a subject search based on the subject headings listed.

You should know that the official subject heading assigned to a book is not necessarily a commonly-used term. For instance, the LCSH for the Vietnam War is NOT "Vietnam War" but rather "Vietnamese conflict, 1961-1975."

Once you have identified the appropriate Library of Congress Subject Heading, you can pair that heading with specific subheadings that identify materials as primary sources. Some of the subheadings are:

- correspondence
- pamphlets
- diaries
- periodicals
- early works to 1800
- personal narratives
- interviews
- sources

You can add any of the subheadings listed above with a Library of Congress Subject Heading to specifically search for primary source material. For example:

- world war 1939-1945 england personal narratives
- student movements japan history sources
- anarchism united states pamphlets
- france revolution correspondence
- soviet union history revolution 1917-1921 pamphlets
- women suffrage united states history sources

You can also limit your search to archival or manuscript materials in the library catalogs. For example:

Pathfinder (Full Feature)

Subject [keyword]: vietnamese conflict protest movements
Format:manuscripts

CDL/Melvyl Catalog (Power search)

Subject: california gold discoveries
Form:Archives/Manuscripts

B. Look up the people, organizations, and agencies as authors

Materials that were written or produced by them either at the time of the event or later will, in most cases, be primary sources. Examples:

- In any of the catalogs, look up individual names as personal author or author.
  - sanger, margaret
  - pankhurst, christabel

- Look up group names or organizations as corporate author or author.
  - american birth control league retrieves a collection of pamphlets they issued
  - congress of racial equality retrieves the Congress or Racial Equality (CORE) papers

In the California Digital Library, you can select the Periodicals (PE) database, and then look up personal or corporate authors to find serial publications such as newsletters, annual reports, magazines, journals, etc.

- corporate author: woman's christian temperance union
  retrieves The Temperance Educational Quarterly

C. Identify Contemporary Books from the Era

If you wish to identify textbooks or other contemporary books of a particular era, you can either use a trade bibliography such as Cumulative Book Index which lists books published year by year, or you can use the online catalogs and limit your search by date.
In the Melvyl System, you must limit to a single year, a three-year period (for 20th century) or a five-year period (for the 19th century). In Pathfinder, limit to a single year or a any range of years. Examples:

Melvyl System via the Web (Power)
Subject: etiquette
in: Complete List
limit to: 1930–1932 (date)

UCB Library Pathfinder (Full Feature search)
Subject [keyword]: infant care
Year(s): 1910–1929

2. USE PERIODICAL AND NEWSPAPER INDEXES COVERING THE TIME PERIOD

Finding newspaper and magazine articles from the time period you are researching is a two-step process. To find citations to individual articles, use a newspaper or periodical index. These indexes are available in print and/or electronic formats.

After you use the index, search a library catalog such as Pathfinder to determine whether the periodical or newspaper is available at UC Berkeley.

Newspaper indexes:
- Daily Californian Index (1874-1994)
- Index to the Times (London) (1790 - )
- New York Times Index (1851-present)
- Historical Newspapers Online http://historynews.chadwyck.com/
  includes some years of The Times (London) and New York Times
- San Francisco Newspapers Index (1904-59)

Periodical indexes:
- International Index to Periodicals (1906-1965)
- Nineteenth Century Reader's Guide (1890-1922)
- Periodical Contents Index (PCI) (1770-1995) http://pci.chadwyck.com
- Poole's Index to Periodical Literature (1802-1906) http://poolesplus.odyssi.com
- Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature (1900-present )
- Social Sciences and Humanities Index (1965-1973)
- Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals (1824-1900) [CD-ROM index; also available in print]

Newspapers on the Web:
For a list of newspapers available in full-text online, see http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/PrimarySourcesOnTheWeb.html#journals

There is also a guide in the Periodicals/Newspapers/Microforms Room (http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/PMN/) listing newspapers by year, so that once you have the date for a newsworthy event, you can go to virtually any paper likely to cover the story.

You can also use UCB Library Pathfinder to identify newspapers by format or by place of publication. For example:

UCB Library Pathfinder (Full Feature Search)
Search for: oakland california
in: ng: Geographical Access [keyword] (ng = newspaper geographic index)

3. GO TO SPECIAL COLLECTIONS OF PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL

Go to libraries which have collections of manuscripts, papers, organizational records, ephemera or other unpublished materials relating to the people, organizations and agencies involved in the events. These are often original, one-of-a-kind materials.

The Bancroft Library at http://bancroft.berkeley.edu has many special collections and is particularly strong in the history of the western United States and California history. Examples include an extensive collection of materials relating to the internment and relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II; an excellent collection on the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Fire; and a special collection of underground newspapers from the 1950s, 60s and 70s. For UC Berkeley campus history, check the University Archives at the Bancroft Library.
Some special collections on campus have been digitizing their resources on the World Wide Web and can be accessed through the Berkeley Library SunSITE at [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/) and include: The Jack London Collection at [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/London/), the Emma Goldman Papers at [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Goldman/) and the California Heritage collection of historical images at [http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/CalHeritage/](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/CalHeritage/)

For local history, there are collections of primary sources in the Berkeley Public Library, the Oakland Public Library, San Francisco Public Library and at the local historical society libraries such as the California Historical Society. American History Sourcebook (1988), available in the reference collection, is a guide to special collections in libraries, museums, archives, etc., arranged by state. You can use it to identify archival collections in the Bay Area.

The Online Archive of California (OAC) at [http://www.oac.cdlib.org/](http://www.oac.cdlib.org/) is a searchable online database of finding aids to archival collections. Finding aids are indexes or guides to collections held by archive and manuscript repositories, libraries and museums. Some finding aids list the contents of the collection, box by box and folder by folder; others are less detailed. In some cases, online finding aids link to the item in the collections such as the image of a letter written by Emma Goldman or the California Heritage Collection. There are 13 institutions represented in the OAC including the University of California campuses, Stanford.

### 4. FIND POPULAR FICTION, MOVIES, TELEVISION FROM THE TIME PERIOD

To identify works of literature, films or popular fiction dealing with a particular theme or topic, you can consult one of the following print indexes:

- Fiction Catalog
- Play Index
- Short Story Index
- Bestseller Index

For popular films and television programs, you should consult the Media Resources Center Subject Videographies at [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/VideographyMenu.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/VideographyMenu.html). You may be interested in seeing how a particular ethnic group was portrayed in the popular media of the time; or you may wish to see old television commercials or view episodes of popular TV shows. Consult videographies such as:

- The Movies, Race and Ethnicity
- Popular Culture

There are also handbooks and websites which can be used to identify films by theme, such as:

- Handbook of American Film Genres
- Internet Movie Database [http://www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)
- Film Index International

### 5. FIND PUBLIC OPINION POLLS FROM THE TIME PERIOD

To identify public opinion polls, talk to the librarians at the Doe Reference Center, 2nd floor Doe Library, and the Institute of Governmental Studies Library at [http://www.igs.berkeley.edu:8880/library/](http://www.igs.berkeley.edu:8880/library/). Among the most important sources are:

- American Public Opinion Index. 1983-present (Index to microfiche collection of poll results.)
- California Poll. 1958-present
- California Opinion Index, 1979-present (Published by the Field Institute). Available at the Institute of Governmental Studies Library.

### 6. USE INDEXES TO GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

Publications generated by a government body, public records, reports and statistics such as census records, laws, Supreme Court decisions and treaties, are excellent sources of primary materials. Ask at a reference desk in Doe or Moffitt for assistance in locating government documents related to your topic. You can also search several indexes to government documents available online.

- Congressional Universe (1789-present) [http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp](http://web.lexis-nexis.com/congcomp)

For web access to the following indexes, go to the Government and Social Science Information Serviceweb page at [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/GSSI/](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/GSSI/) and select the title of the index from the “Go Directly to Your Subject of Choice” menu.

- Foreign Broadcast Information Service Electronic Index (1975-1996)
- Index to UN Documents and Publications (1950-present)

The library also houses the British Parliamentary Papers on microfiche and print. (See guide at [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/GSSI/bpp.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/GSSI/bpp.html).) There are many other useful guides to finding government documents available from the GSSI Research Guides page at [http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/GSSI/guides.html](http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/GSSI/guides.html)