

*IMSA Information Resource Center*

# *Primary Source History Research*

*A Guide to Get You Started*

Primary sources are original records created at the time historical events occurred or well after events in the form of memoirs and oral histories. Primary sources may include letters, manuscripts, journals, newspapers, speeches, interviews, photographs, audio/video recordings and artifacts. These sources serve as the raw material to interpret the past through historical research.

## Database Sources

- Annals of American History: search by year, topic, author
- HarpWeek (Harper's Weekly): America's illustrated newspaper, 1857-1912
- History Reference Center: Search for U.S. and World history. Full text reference and non-fiction books, history journals, documents, biographies, photos, maps, and video.
- Newsbank Retrospective: Articles cover social, political, economic, environmental, international, health, and science issues and events from contemporary American history, including firsthand reports and varying regional perspectives. Use for background information on more recent issues and events
- Also in Newsbank—The Chicago Tribune Historical Archive: Obituaries and death notices (1860-1984), Front Pages (1900-1984) and Morgue clippings (1920-1984)
- Virtual Reference Library: Some primary source material but mainly encyclopedias. Search various publications under History.

## Internet Sources

While the Web can serve as a valuable resource when searching for primary sources, one should use caution in determining the veracity of a site and its contents. The following reputable sites link to thousands of primary sources.

- American Memory: Historical Collections for the National Digital Library  
<http://memory.loc.gov>
- Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy  
<http://yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm>
- EuroDocs: Western European Primary Historical Documents  
<http://library.byu.edu/~rdh/eurodocs/>
- The New York Public Library Digital Collection: thousands of images from the library's collection  
[www.nypl.org/digital/index.htm](http://www.nypl.org/digital/index.htm)

- U.S. history primary source documents from the University of Oklahoma (pre-colonial to present)  
<http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/>

**National Geographic** In various locations—CD Rom set 1888-2000, bound volumes 1918-1994 (incomplete), unbound issues 1995-Present

### Reference Materials

- *The African-American Archive: the History of the Black Experience in Documents*  
R 973.0496073 WRIGAFRI2001
  - *American Decades Primary Sources*  
R. 973.91 ROSEAMER
  - *Annals of America. Great Issues in American Life: a Conspectus*  
R 973 ANNA1968
  - *Our Nation's Archive: the History of the United States in Documents*  
R 973 BRUUOUR1999
  - *Presidential Profiles* (The Carter Years, The Nixon-Ford Years, The Reagan Years, etc.)  
Various Call Numbers
- Browse Reference section in the 900s for other books including Historical Atlases
- *The Penguin Historical Atlas of North America*  
R. 911.7 HOMBPENG1995

### Catalog Search

- **Any Word Anywhere Search:** "Primary Source"
- **Subject Search:** Search terms "United States History" or "Germany History" or "United States Politics and Government History" etc. then browse through the results containing the subheading "sources". (Note: the subheading History results are arranged chronologically when doing a subject search)

OR

- **Subject Search:** Speeches, addresses, etc.
- **Advanced Search:** "Electronic Resource" AND "Primary" (for e-books)

**MOST IMPORTANTLY, Ask us! We have many more sources available**

IMSA Information Resource Center  
<http://staff.imsa.edu/irc/>  
[irc@imsa.edu](mailto:irc@imsa.edu) (630) 907-5920