Primary sources are **contemporary accounts** of an event, written by someone who experienced or witnessed the event in question. These **original documents** (i.e., they are not about another document or account) are often diaries, letters, memoirs, journals, speeches, manuscripts, interviews and other such unpublished works. They may also include published pieces such as newspaper or magazine articles (as long as they are written soon after the fact and not as historical accounts), photographs, audio or video recordings, research reports in the natural or social sciences, or original literary or theatrical works.

**Primary:** First-hand account of an event, an original work

- Autobiographies, letters, e-mails, diaries, speeches, interviews
- Documents, laws, treaties
- Raw data that has been collected
- Works of literature, art, music
- Newspaper accounts of events, by someone on the scene

**Secondary:** A summary, interpretation, or analysis of something else

- Articles, books, biographies which summarize, interpret the original statements, documents
- Textbooks
- Analysis of statistics
- Criticism — of literature, art, music
- Secondary accounts of events by those who compile and synthesize the original accounts

**Tertiary:** Usually a combination or collection of primary and secondary sources

- Encyclopedias
- Dictionaries
- Indexes
- Handbooks, guidebooks, manuals