Primary Resources for Historical Research: A Guide to Selected Resources throughout the ULS and Beyond

What is a Primary Source?

A primary source is a source that was created during or immediately after the event or period that it documents. Primary sources enable researchers to get as close as possible to what actually happened during an historical event or time period.

What is a Secondary Source?

A secondary source is a work that *interprets* or *analyzes* an historical event, time period and or phenomenon. ***Primary*** sources can easily be distinguished from ***secondary*** sources, which are sources created at some later time.

Examples of Primary Sources:

Books
Memoirs
Letters
Diaries
Interviews
Photographs
Autobiographies
Speeches
Audio and Video Recordings
Manuscript and Archival Materials

Primary Sources via PITT'S Databases (A-Z List):

American Civil War: Letters and Diaries
North American Immigrant Letters, and Oral Histories
North American Women's Letters and Diaries
Historic Pittsburgh
Pennsylvania Gazette 1728-1800
African American Newspapers (19th Century)
Historical Abstracts
New York Times Historical (1851-2001)
Early English Books Online
Digital National Security Archive
Evans Digital Editions
Times of London Digital Archive (1785-1985)

Primary Sources via Libraries and Collections within the ULS:

Archive Service Center: Archives of Industrial Society, The Dick Thornburgh Archives, University Archives, University Records Management

Elizabeth Nesbitt Room: Special Collections related to the history of children and their books and media

Darlington Memorial Library: American history and literature, rare maps, atlases, and early travel narratives.

Center for American Music (Stephen Foster): Reflects a broad cross-section of American popular culture, especially from the 1840's to the 1930's.

Primary Sources on the Web:

American Memory: Historical Collections for the National Digital Library
http://memory.loc.gov

Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy
http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm

Online Data Archive: Historical Data on topics such as 18th and 19th century slave trade and the Russian imperial bureaucracy
http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/archive.html