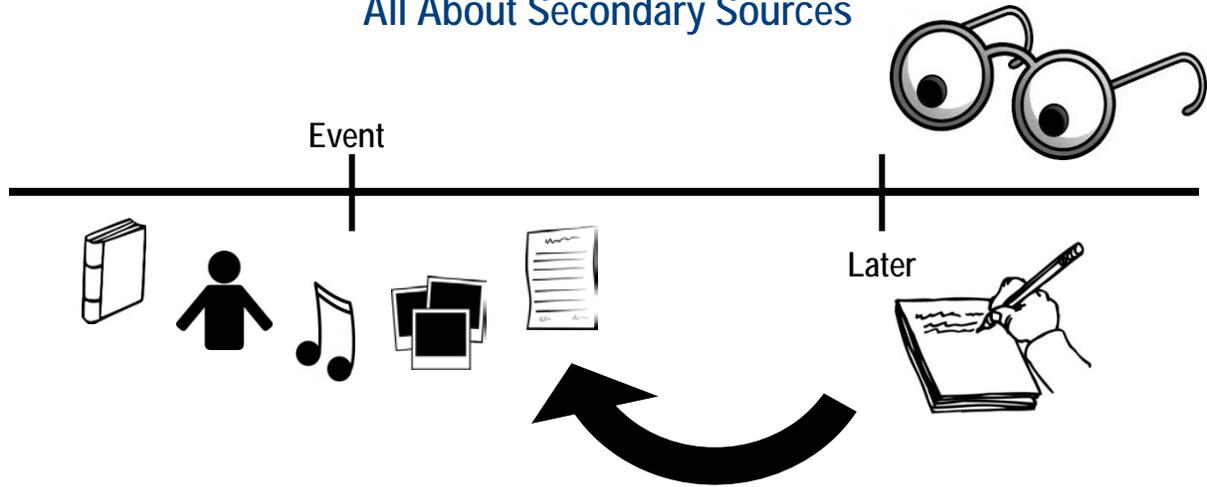




All About Secondary Sources



Definition: anything *not* from the time of the event; the creator/writer was not an eyewitness or participant. Usually includes interpretations or conclusions about primary sources

Examples: articles, textbooks, documentaries, most websites, interviews with scholars

What they are not: eyewitness stories, diaries, newspapers (from the time), journals

How to find them:

- Google intelligently.
 - Search smart and click with confidence, meaning the source is reliable.
 - Use the “books” tab to find stronger sources.
- Do a quick Wikipedia search.
 - This will provide a useful overview of your topic.
 - NEVER CITE this, but use it to generate ideas of where to starting looking for quality sources.
- Find books!
 - Get the background on the topic and that will help direct your research.
 - Use the table of contents to guide your reading.
- Gather different perspectives.
 - Not everyone always agrees on how to think of an event.
 - Explore different sides/views and spend time looking at what each side.

Why are secondary sources important?

Secondary sources help with context and demonstrate how historians may have changed their perspectives over time. You should have current secondary sources. If all of your secondary sources are from the 1960s—do you think that tells the full story?

What if a witness shares their story 40 years later, is that a secondary source?

No, because they were still there! Memories are primary sources, no matter when they are shared.

What if there is a primary source in a secondary source?

That can be a great find, but frustrating to cite. What you do is find the original document used in the secondary source (sometimes authors edit or cut out parts of the original). Cite the secondary source separate from the primary source. Explain this find in your annotations!

I found two secondary sources that disagree, what do I do?

Have no fear! You have different points of view; explore why there is this disagreement. As a historian, it is your job to investigate these different histories and share your findings.

Do I have to read the *whole* book?

Only if you wish! A good research uses the table of contents and index (in the back) to guide their reading. Once you find a chapter/section of interest, skim to pick out the main points.

Where can I find good books to read?

Look on Amazon. If you search keywords under 'Books,' you can often find entire books or large portions online without buying them! Chances are you can find the book at your local public library or nearby college. Still looking for more? Search WorldCat or library.wisc.edu!

I found a book, but it's somewhere else. What do I do?

If you found a book on library.wisc.edu and it is at any UW school, you can request that book at your local public library. Once you request the book, it will be to your local public library in about 1-2 weeks, but it's worth the wait! If the book is not at UW, search public libraries or see if there is a digital version on Amazon, GoogleBooks or WorldCat.

How do I know if a website is reliable?

Can the source pass the CARP test?

Currency: When was the information published? Has it been updated—when?

Authority: Who is the creator? Are they qualified to write about this topic? Are they affiliated with any groups or organizations? Can they be contacted?

Reliability: Where does the information come from? Does the creator provide sources? Has the information been reviewed—by whom? Do you feel comfortable using this source?

Purpose: Why was this created? Is the information fact or opinion?

How do I cite them?

Separate your bibliography into primary and secondary sources. Keep in mind the purpose of an annotated bibliography is for someone to find your sources later if they wish.

Examples from National Qualifiers:

Citation	<i>Millenium</i> . "Somehow, Satan Got behind Me." Episode 21, season 2. First broadcast May 1, 1998. Directed by Darin Morgan.
Annotation	This source provided a comedic approach to the topic of censorship by providing situations that should or should not be censored. In this episode, it showed the process of declaring that a show or movie is not code abiding and who took care of these matters.
Citation	Shepard, Benjamin. "History or Myth? Writing Stonewall." <i>Lambda Book Report</i> , August/September 2004, 12-14. MasterFILE Premier (14738999).
Annotation	This journal article helped me to tell about the impact of Stonewall on the New York Police Department. This article talks about Seymour Pine's perspective of the raid. It also gave me information on how the LGBT+ community is split on the argument of the 22 importance of Pine.