## Primary vs. Secondary Sources – What are the Differences?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Sources are…</th>
<th>Secondary Sources are…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>… sources of information or data that are not interpreted, evaluated, or analyzed</td>
<td>… sources that analyze, interpret, or otherwise evaluate primary sources</td>
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### Examples
- Census data
- Firsthand accounts of events
- Diaries and autobiographies
- Emails, blog entries, other Internet communications
- Original documents (i.e., birth certificates, trial transcripts)
- Article in an academic journal that presents original research and its methodology
- Technical documents

### Examining primary sources, such as original firsthand documents, makes the study of history much more like discovery: meaningful, fun, and direct.

### Secondary Sources are helpful because they repackage, reorganize, reinterpret, summarize, or otherwise "add value" to primary sources

### How Primary and Secondary Sources Work Together …

… if you were researching plantation life in the American South in the late 1800s, you could consult the diary of a plantation mistress (primary source) as well as an article or book that discusses how plantations typically functioned during the time period you are studying (secondary source)

### Primary Sources at the Ort Library
- Many diaries and autobiographies to check out
- Numerous local historical accounts in Special Collections (4th Floor)
- Public and Private Papers of two U.S. Senators from Frostburg in the Beall Archives (4th floor) – plus original documents from the American Communist Party!
- Extensive newspaper collection on microfilm, some dating back to the 18th Century (2nd floor)
- Library of American Civilization Collection on microfiche, chronicling the history of the United States from a first-hand point-of-view from the Colonial Era up to World War I
- Plus much more – just ask a librarian!