

Recording the Past

Event Occurs

(Something Happens)

Primary Sources

Contemporary Persons (participants/eyewitnesses) record their own accounts in diaries, letters, speeches, memoirs, autobiographies, oral interviews, images; can be actual manuscripts or transcriptions

Other contemporary evidence: newspaper/magazine articles; public records (birth, death, probate & census records, court cases,...); maps; artifacts (coins, receipts, schedules, tombstones, furniture...); creative works

Time Passes

Secondary Sources

(Second-hand accounts)

Persons who consulted eyewitnesses may later write memoirs, diaries, etc. (hearsay accounts)

Historians write scholarly accounts (academic books: histories & biographies; articles in scholarly journals) by consulting primary sources & other scholarly accounts

Historians or others may write popular nonfiction books or magazine articles; museums, films may also interpret the past; DNA evidence?

Time Passes

Reference Sources

Accounts of events are organized:

Encyclopedias & Handbooks summarize the facts; Wikipedia

Bibliographies record primary & secondary sources

Databases/indexes list articles; Internet search engines (i.e., Google Scholar)

You are Here

Research Tools

Guides & handbooks list reference sources

Library catalogs record the collections of individual libraries (books, journals, films; primary & secondary sources)

Catalogs beyond library catalogs: WorldCat, Google Book Search, Amazon.com, Alibris.com the IMDB, etc.