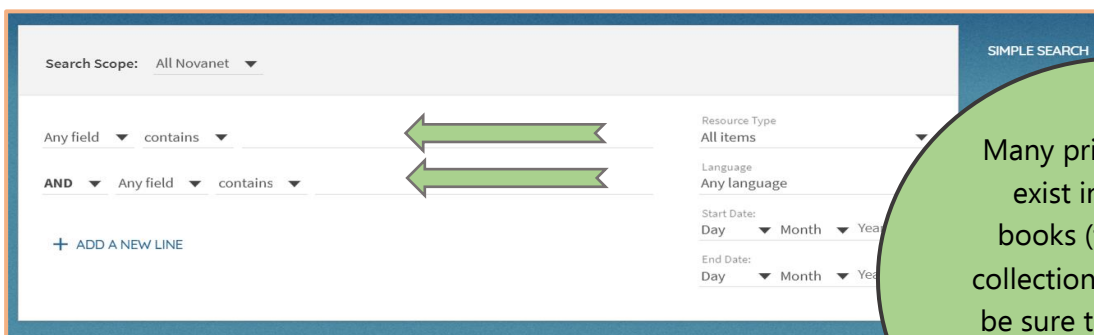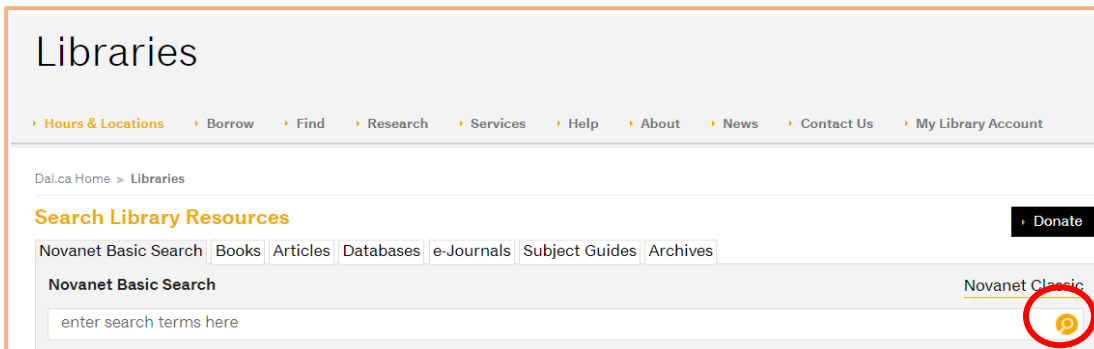# WHAT IS A PRIMARY SOURCE?

A primary source is any document or artifact created at the time of an event. They may describe an experience or thought about the event. Some examples include: diaries, journals, letters, photographs, maps, recorded film or audio, interviews, speeches, sculptures, statistical data, a statute of government, some newspaper and magazine articles, manuscripts, minutes, fossils, and some original research or experimentation. Primary sources can also be more current. For example, a tweet from the Women's March can be considered a primary source for that event.

FINDING PRIMARY SOURCES

Using the Novanet catalogue

- Start at libraries.dal.ca
- Click on the magnifying glass to bring up an empty search.
- Click "**advanced search**."
- Change the first drop-down menu from "**author/creator**," to "**subject**."
- Enter the type of resource you are looking for (diary, letter, source).
- On the second line, enter the keywords for your topic.

Many primary sources exist in published books (for example, collections of letters) so be sure to look closely at the results!

Refining Your Search

Resource Type ⌃

Articles *(704)*

Audio Visual *(1)*

Books *(1,796)*

Conference Proceedings *(1)*

Dissertations *(164)*

Journals *(3)*

Newspaper Articles *(87)*

Other *(1)*

Reviews *(98)*

Technical Report *(1)*

Text Resources *(6)*

Creation Date ⌃

From   To

1500   2017   Refine

You can continue to refine your search by subject, or even by the language in which a source was published!

Narrow your search by resource type along the left side of the page. Materials like legal documents, government documents, technical reports, images, and more can be primary sources.

Narrow your search by date range to find material published during the time period that interests you.

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY   libraries.dal.ca

Dalhousie University Libraries / LibGuides / History / Home   Login to LibApps.

History

a guide for study and scholarship at Dalhousie.

Home		Search this Guide Search
Key Databases		

Canadian

European

Other Americas

Africa, the Middle East, and Asia

Book Reviews

~~Primary Sources~~

Writing History Papers

New Books

Reference resources

Getting Started - Finding books

Books, either electronic or hard copy, are the format of choice for starting a term paper -–- journal articles can sometimes be too specific. Browsing the first chapter, last chapter, table of contents, or relevant references in the index of a book can often be a good way to get started with finding books on your topic.

These two short videos demonstrate how to find print books and e-books using the Novanet catalog:

Video: Finding print books in Novanet

Video: Finding ebooks in Novanet

In order to find print books on the shelves you'll need to know how to read a call number. This short video demonstrates how to find a call number:

Video: How to read a call number in 90 seconds

These place a hold or order a book from another university Library in Nova Scotia, please view the following video:

Video: Placing holds and requesting books in Novanet

How this guide is organized

Core academic skills for students

Students! Not sure where to start? Looking to get a handle on some core skills that will help you with research? Look no further!

Visit our **Core skills** for resources on how to research like a pro!
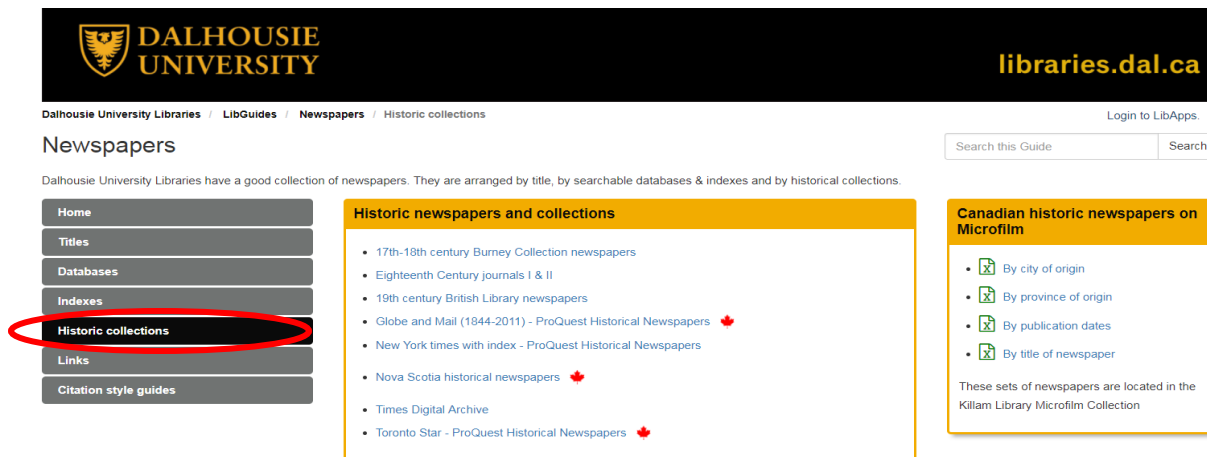
Subject Librarian

The Primary Sources page of the History subject guide lists specific library databases that can be searched and browsed for primary source material. You will also find links on this page to online primary sources for specific historical eras and on specific geographical areas.
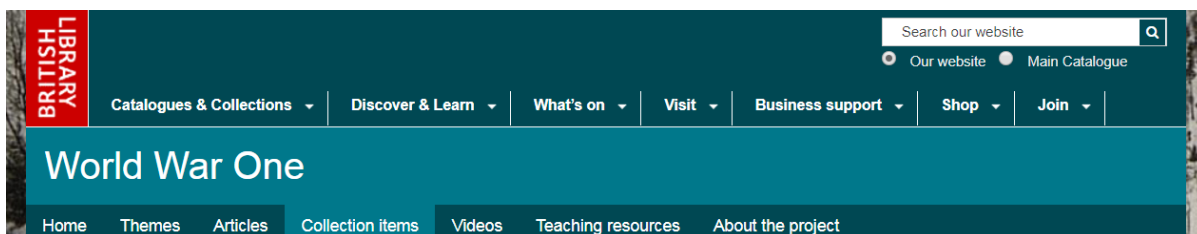
Using Online Resources

Online primary source websites can help you reach material about specific regions of the world and/or specific eras.

This History subject guide links to the Newspapers subject guide, where you can find historic collections of newspapers. These online collections can be useful for primary source research.

Local and national archive websites can also help you reach primary sources.

Interested in learning more? Check out our <u>video tutorials</u> on primary sources.