

## Does the source fit the assignment? Analyzing your information needs

There are lots of different sources out there, but not all sources are created equal. Some assignments may require specific types of sources, while other assignments may need a variety of source types. Analyzing your information needs is best done by focusing on a set of questions that will help you determine the aspects of the topic you wish to explore.

### ? Treatment of Topic ?

Do you need facts? Opinions? Background information? Statistics? Analysis? Do you need an in-depth treatment of the topic? Do you need an account of an event as it happened? *Primary* sources allow you to get as close to an event or an account as possible. Do you need analyses or interpretations? *Secondary* sources based on primary sources will provide these. For a research paper, a good rule of thumb is to choose both primary and secondary sources.

### ? Timeliness ?

Is timeliness an issue? Do you need current information? Do you need a historical perspective?

### ? Focus ?

Do you need a specific subject area or discipline such as humanities, social sciences, or science? For example, if you are researching the relationship between teen media viewing and teen violence, would you look for information published in the field of mass media or would you look for information in the social and psychological sciences?

### ? Level of Scholarship ?

Do you need brief facts, not backed by research? Do you need a description of an event? If so, you should use *popular* sources. If you need a more in-depth treatment of a topic that includes scholarship, e.g. research, textual analysis, etc., you should consult *scholarly* sources.

## Does the source fit my assignment?

Information Need	Sources to Consult	Search tools and Help
<i>Preliminary Ideas</i>	Course Readings & Bibliographies	Ask A Librarian staff Browse Current Periodicals (lower level, west wing) Internet
<i>Overview of Topic</i>	Encyclopedias Wikipedia Books Periodicals	Ask A Librarian staff Library catalog (PantherCat) Databases

<i>Definitions</i>	Dictionaries Wikipedia	Library catalog (PantherCat)
<i>Primary Sources</i>	Newspapers Research reports Archives Government publications	Library catalog (PantherCat) Databases Internet
<i>Secondary Sources</i>	Books Articles Subject encyclopedias	Library catalog (PantherCat) Databases
<i>Facts</i>	Almanacs Yearbooks Statistics Government publications	Library catalog (PantherCat) Statistical Indexes Internet
<i>Current Information</i>	Newspapers Popular articles	Databases World Wide Web
<i>Historical Information</i>	Books Encyclopedias Reference Books Periodicals	Library catalog (PantherCat) Browse reference shelves Databases
<i>Evaluative Sources</i>	Book reviews Biographies Literature reviews	Indexes to book reviews Library catalog (PantherCat) Internet