Primary and Secondary Sources

What’s the difference?!
Primary Sources

- Original documents
- First hand accounts or individual representations
- Sources created during an experience or time-period, offer first-hand account of events
- May be published or unpublished works
Types of Primary Sources

- **Original Documents**
  - diaries, speeches, manuscripts, letters, interviews, news film footage, autobiographies, official records

- **Creative Works**
  - poetry, drama, novels, music, art

*Dorothea Lange's Migrant Mother* from Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog [www.loc.gov/pictures](http://www.loc.gov/pictures)
Examples of Primary Sources

- Diary of Anne Frank
- The Scream by Munch
- Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address
- Lyrics to Lady Gaga’s album *The Fame Monster*
- A journal article reporting NEW research or findings

*A young black school girl describes school work, friends, religious observances and her resolutions for the year.*

Available through North American Women’s Letters and Diaries
Secondary Sources

- Interpret and/or analyze primary sources
- Sources one or more step removed from what they are describing
- Second-hand account of an historical event
- May have pictures, quotes or graphics of primary sources in them
- Published works
Examples of Secondary Sources:

- Textbooks
- Encyclopedias
- Journal/magazine article (one that interprets or reviews previous findings)
- Proceedings of conferences and meetings
Instructors, departments, and disciplines define ‘primary sources’ differently. Contact your faculty member if you are unclear what counts as a primary source for an assignment.

If you need more help, please refer to the library’s Primary Source page (http://tinyurl.com/mngyecq). It provides helpful information on where to go to find primary documents.
Still Need Help?
Stop by CSB/SJU Libraries
www.csbsju.edu/library