

Evaluating and Reevaluating Sources

CARRIE ANN COOK

PRIMARY/ORIGINAL
PRIMARY/DERIVATIVE

SECONDARY/ORIGINAL
SECONDARY/DERIVATIVE

1. All data is either:
 - a. Original data/format is **original** (records, funeral card, letters, home videos, etc.)
 - b. Derivative is copied, compiled, transcription or extract – technically everything in electronic format not produced originally in that format (most websites, photocopies, microfilm, compiled or edited publications, etc.)
2. Evaluate and establish your Standards
 - a. Primary: Created by source ancestor or professional – minister of wedding, birth parent, etc.
 - b. Secondary: Reported by others or after the fact – reconstituted birth record, staff written news article, etc.
 - c. “Tricky source” examples – could go either/or
 - i. Census
 - ii. Autobiography/memoir
 - iii. First person historian reported history
 - iv. Primary data that contradicts each other with the same source
 - d. Preponderance of Evidence
 - i. Help decide what primary evidence to look for
 - ii. Enough secondary or primary-Derivative can lend credence to theories
 - iii. Perhaps only evidence available
 - iv. May Clear up mysteries created by primary data
 - e. Important to Process: Research Log/Calendar
 - i. where you’ve been and where you are going
 - ii. trail of breadcrumbs in case discarded items require another look later
 - iii. Plot your progress
 - iv. Jump start to citing your sources

PRIMARY/ORIGINAL
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A few readily available resources

- a. Home/Personal
 - i. Records or certificates of any type
 - ii. Letter, diary, journal, other writing
 - iii. Newspaper clipping
 - iv. Legal papers, ledgers, etc.
 - v. Oral history/Eye witness account
 - vi. Audio or video recordings
- b. Public (general)
 - i. Courthouse
 - 1. Records
 - 2. People who work with said records
 - ii. Library/Archive/Museum
 - 1. Ready Reference
 - 2. Finding Aids
 - 3. Published history/genealogy/record
 - 4. Unpublished history/genealogy/record
 - 5. Newspapers
 - 6. "Trade" Magazines such as Everton's, Family Tree, Ancestry, etc.
 - 7. Newsletters and other periodicals
 - 8. Copy/transcription/abstraction record
 - 9. Genealogist and/or reference specialist(s)



Review & Research – know the battlefield for best results

- 1. What information was recorded in a given resource ** Read any finding aids
- 2. How was the resource compiled/recorded
- 3. Ask assistance and follow up anything "out of the ordinary"
- 4. Copy all
 - a. Actual entry
 - b. Index entries
 - c. First page of chapter where mentioned
 - d. Forpages (title, verso, table of contents, preface, intro., forward, abbreviations, etc.)
- 5. Cite All
 - a. Author/compiler/recorder
 - b. Title/item
 - c. Full publication information or description of item
 - d. Where found on a particular date, contact information of repository (URL), where possible, as well.
 - e. Further details – page number, where on page, alternate sources you know of, did you take a photo or copy (where in your records), etc.