

Conducting the Research

Researching your topic is the most difficult portion of the entire project. The more time you spend finding quality sources, the better your project will turn out. **YOU CANNOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE.** It is near impossible to find all the information, primary sources, and answers you need in just a few days. Once your topic and research question are finalized research should begin immediately. Any night there is no social studies homework should allow for some research time.

Relying solely on the Internet is challenging unless you know where to look. Simple Google/Yahoo searches will not reveal most of the information available, but can provide a start. Databases such as the National Archives do not let Google see what they hold. You actually have to visit sites individually and use their search engines.

Tips for Better Internet Searches:

- Try a variety of terms in different orders for the topic you are researching. A thesaurus might help (Ex: civil right, voting rights, act, law, bill, amendment...)
- Too many sources? Use quotes to get more specific. This will tell the search engine to find only sites with the search words in that order. Searching for George Washington will give sites about the president, but also any site about a man named George who lived, worked or was born in Washington. (Ex: search "George Washington")
- Still too many sources? Write additional key terms in the search engine, or part of your questions. (Ex: "George Washington" neutrality France)
- Getting too many useless sources? Use the advanced search feature to limit some of the hits. You can subtract terms that are pointless for you as well by using a minus in your search. Example would be searching the Sons of Liberty patriotic organization, but getting hits regarding the Sons of Liberty video game. To stop this search: "Sons of Liberty" –"video game" or –"Playstation"
- Make sure your websites are quality. You do not want to cite a 4th grade project from Kansas in your own work. **Signs of a good site include a date when it was last modified, an author and a bibliography for its resources. Also, use sites that end in .edu, .gov or .org.**
- Have plenty of secondary but no primary sources? Try including the term "primary source" in your search, or put your person of interest in as the author on an advanced search. This will show items written by your person.

- Still not enough primary? Log onto specific web sites and databases and search from within those. Examples include the national, local and state archives.
- Email can also provide information. Email archivists and ask for help on your topic. Is there someone still living that may allow for an email interview?
- Images and pictures can be primary sources that supply information. Make sure you cite all images you plan to use as well.

Remember:

A key to a good National History Day project is having many quality primary sources. There are numerous resources available in the Baltimore/Washington, DC area. For example, Howard County has a historical society, numerous historical sites and museums. In Baltimore, the Maryland Historical Society offers sources for a variety of topics. There are also many museums and exhibits located in the city. In addition, many of the local universities/colleges have extensive collections available for research. Washington, DC is home to the Library of Congress and the National Archives. In addition, there are many museums and monuments located in Washington, including the Smithsonian Institute.

Recommended Sites:

Below you will find a list of websites worth visiting that may help you get started on your project.

National History Day (National level) <http://www.nationalhistoryday.org/>

Find all requirements, helpful links, and a forum for students to discuss issues/questions

Citation Resources

Online Writing Lab <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/index.html>

Internet Public Library for Teens <http://www.ipl.org/div/aplus/linkciting.htm>

The Writing Center (Univ. of Wisconsin)

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Documentation.html>

Primary Sources

Library of Congress homepage <http://lcweb.loc.gov/homepage/lchp.html>

National Archives, NAIL, NARA, ARC

http://www.archives.gov/research_room/arc/index.html

Repositories of Primary Sources <http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html>

German propaganda during WWII <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/>

Modern History Sourcebook

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html>

Ancient Greek and Roman Resources <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/>

SIRS Decades (20th Century Primary Source Documents) <http://ars.sir.com>
Smithsonian Institute Research <http://www.siris.si.edu/>
Directory of State Historical Societies
<http://www.daddezio.com/society/hill/index.html>
United Nations Educational & Cultural Org.
http://www.unesco.org/webworld/portal_archives/pages/Archives/
Maryland Historical Society <http://www.mdhs.org/>

Ask a Researcher

A fulltime online librarian <http://www.denver.lib.co.us/smartypants.html>
Ask a hyperhistorian <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/hyperhistorian.cfm>

Local Organizations

Maryland Council for the Social Studies <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/>
Maryland History Day <http://www.mdhc.org/programs/history.htm>
Maryland Humanities Council <http://www.mdhc.org/>
Maryland State Department of Education <http://www.msde.state.md.us/MSDE>

Archives and Libraries

Enoch Pratt Free Library and State Library Resource Center
<http://www.epfl.net/slrp/index.html>
Marylandia and Rare Books Department
<http://www.lib.umd.edu/RARE/index.html>
Maryland State Archives <http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/>
National Agricultural Library <http://www.nal.usda.gov/>
National Library of Medicine (NLM) <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/>
National Trust for Historic Preservation Library
<http://www.lib.umd.edu/NTL/ntl.html>
Nixon Presidential Project <http://nixon.archives.gov/index.php>
University System of Maryland Libraries <http://www.lib.umd.edu/>

Historical Societies, Museums and Historic Sites

B&O Railroad Museum <http://www.borail.org/>
Baltimore Museum of Industry <http://www.thebmi.org/>
Baltimore Streetcar Museum <http://www.baltimorestreetcar.org/>
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum <http://www.cbmm.org/>
C&O Canal National Historical Park <http://www.nps.gov/choh/>
Fort McHenry <http://www.nps.gov/fomc/>
Glenn L. Martin Aviation Museum <http://www.marylandaviationmuseum.org/>
Historic St. Mary's City <http://www.stmaryscity.org/>
Jewish Historical Society Museum of Maryland <http://www.jhsm.org/>
Maryland Historical Society <http://www.mdhs.org/>
Maryland Historical Society Digitized Collections <http://www.mdhs.org/>
Maryland Historical Trust <http://www.mdhs.org/>
Montgomery County Historical Society <http://www.montgomeryhistory.org/>
National Cryptologic Museum <http://www.nsa.gov/museum/index.cfm>
National Park Service <http://www.nps.gov/parks.html>

Primary & Secondary Sources

What is a primary source?

A primary source is a document or other sort of evidence written or created during the time under study. Primary sources offer an inside view of a particular event.

What is a secondary source?

A secondary source interprets and analyzes primary sources. Secondary sources are one step removed from the event.

Some examples of secondary sources

Primary Sources

Original Documents

Diaries
Speeches
Letters
Minutes
Photographs
Scholarly journal articles reporting NEW findings
Official records
Autobiographies

People

Interviews
E-mail contacts
Discussions
Debates
Community Meetings
Surveys

Secondary Sources

Textbooks
Reference Materials
Most books on a topic
CD Roms
Encyclopedias
Biographies
Magazines or Newspapers written at the time by someone not present

*Newspapers are a tricky category. If the author was present at the event it is considered primary. Use your best judgment.