

Primary Sources in STEM-H Fields

Primary sources are the original materials or evidence to be analyzed, evaluated, contextualized, or synthesized in the research process.

In STEM-H Fields

Primary sources in STEM-H fields are the first articles published formally describing a research project or study. They often look like secondary sources from the humanities and social sciences fields.

Classic Examples

- Conference proceedings
- Articles describing the research design and findings of original studies
- Articles describing new experiments or sets of experiments
- Reports on original research or observations
- Technical reports addressing an engineering or technological assessment
- Patents, industrial designs, and blueprints

Identification in Context

Sources that are secondary or tertiary in one context might be primary sources in another.

For instance, if your research design called for a content analysis of the coverage of gender roles in high school health textbooks, then these textbooks would be your primary, rather than tertiary, sources.

Likewise, if your research question was “How did 19th century newspapers in the American Northeast address the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*?” then book reviews from that era might be one type of primary source you would want to consult, rather than a secondary source.

Where can I find primary sources?

Multidisciplinary science databases (*Applied Science and Technology Full Text*, *Web of Science*) and specialized or discipline-specific databases (*MEDLINE*, *BIOSIS*, *Compendex*) include primary sources.