

Chapter **1**

Welcome to the Wonderful World of Primary Sources! Let's Get Sourcing!

Brian Furgione, University of Central Florida

Corey R. Sell, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Tina M. Ellsworth, Northwest Missouri State University

Figure 1. *Construction of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., April 19, 1893*



Note. Handy, L. C. (1893). *Construction of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., April 19, 1893* [Photograph]. Library of Congress. www.loc.gov/item/2007664045

Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, or the intentional noting of connections; learning naturally results. (Dewey, 1916, p. 181)

Take a moment and think about how our world is shaped, how perspectives are built, how narratives are created, and how evidence is left behind. The study of social studies hinges on high-quality inquiry driven by strong, relevant source materials. This book is intended to engage you (and, more importantly, your future students) in authentic, inquiry-based lessons that leverage primary sources to do so! (A *primary source* is an artifact created during the time period which is being studied—more on that later.) The chapters will equip you with tools, skills, and approaches to develop social studies inquiries grounded in primary sources. A variety of inquiry designs will be leveraged including the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework (National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], 2013). Let this chapter serve as an introduction to primary sources and the purposes of teaching with them. We will introduce you to the Library of Congress (the *de facto* national library; see Figure 1) and its website, and provide navigation tips for locating primary source materials that will help build a foundation from where you can curate the resources necessary to enhance your approach to teaching social studies in the PK–12 classroom.

When it comes to incorporating sources into the classroom, the sky's the limit. Using intriguing sources in conjunction with compelling questions will support you in developing authentic inquiries and investigations that challenge students to think and develop as scholars and citizens. To set the stage and prime your thinking for using primary sources to paint vivid narratives of history, we must first ask ourselves, what is a *source*?

What's in a Source? An Overview of Primary and Secondary Sources

When you think about the study of social studies, the conversation often relies heavily on textbooks and second-hand (or third- or fourth-hand) accounts of the story. But where do those stories come from? How do we know that the stories we hear are accurate? In their pursuit of answers, historians ask questions about the past and consult evidence left behind from people who lived at the time. They engage with sources to solve mysteries of events and time periods long gone. These sources allow historians to construct meaning of the past and bring historical narratives to life. As social studies teachers, it is our job to position students to engage in the same type of work, which is critical to developing responsible and active citizenship skills. Accessing quality sources allows for authentic inquiry-based social studies. But what is a source, and how do you know if the ones you have are of high quality?

If you were to go out and research “sources,” you would find a host of definitions, examples, and conceptualizations. Historians often label sources they use to construct narratives as “evidence” in the study of history, as the sources serve as evidence to support a claim (Barton, 2005). Some scholars argue for the labeling of these artifacts as “historical sources” (Barton, 2005; Faculty of History, 2020), as they serve to encompass a more inclusive definition and limit the binary categorization bias that may occur when attempting to label all sources as primary or secondary. For the authors in this text and specialists and librarians at the Library of Congress, the common vernacular utilized to describe sources in the PK–12 classroom is *primary* and *secondary sources*.

- *Primary sources* are artifacts created during the time period which is being studied. There are many different kinds of artifacts, but they often include letters, diary entries, newspaper articles, photographs, and videos. In contemporary studies, they may also include tweets, Instagram or Facebook posts, and even TikToks.
- *Secondary sources*, on the other hand, are synthesized items, typically one-step removed and not created at the time of study. There has been a level of analysis or interpretation applied to the source by someone else. Secondary sources may include textbooks, interpreted data, and scholarly articles.

Table 1. *Examples of Potential Primary and Secondary Sources*

| Examples of Sources You May Investigate at the Library of Congress | |
|---|---|
| <i>Traditionally Labeled Primary</i> | <i>Traditionally Labeled Secondary</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diaries/Journals• Photographs• Audio Recordings• Government Documents• Newspapers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Textbooks• Encyclopedias• Biographies• Altered Images• Synthesized Videos |

Note. The introduction to primary sources from KidCitizen may be used to help introduce your elementary students to sources: www.kidcitizen.net/episodes-blog/what-are-primary-sources.

If you read this list and thought to yourself, *Wait, some of these things could be both ...* you are right! What is considered a primary source or a secondary source is often a moving target. As the time period of study changes and the lens of inquiry is shifted, a secondary source may become a primary source. For example, a textbook from the 1800s could be considered a fantastic primary source if you are studying the educational experience of students in the 1800s. Imagine if you were exploring the lives of the Algonquin People and came across an engraving of an [Algonquian Village](#) created in 1619. We know this was created during the *time* the Algonquin People lived in this depicted area, but the drawing was created by John White, an English explorer and settler, not by the Algonquin People themselves, so it would be considered a secondary source rather than a primary source. If, however, your question was centered on the perspective of the Anglo-settlers, this would then be considered a primary source. It is crucial to understand that a source type is not binary, meaning that it is not one or the other, primary or secondary: It can be either, depending on the question (Bober, 2018). What is considered a primary source or a secondary source will depend on the question driving the inquiry. The question you and your students are investigating will alter the lens through which you will look at each source. In other words, the categorization of the source is contingent on the question being asked.

Some common misconceptions regarding primary and secondary sources should be addressed:

- **Misconception:** *Primary and secondary sources are one-size-fits-all.*
- **Reality:** Depending on the question, the lens by which the sources are viewed can be changed, altering the status of the source from primary to secondary. For example, in 2020, *The New York Times*, a newspaper, published an article on the 1918 influenza (Berry & Dickerson, 2020). Just because this article was printed in a newspaper does not mean it is automatically a *primary source*. Instead, it is a *secondary source* about the 1918 influenza, as the authors are interpreting a historical event and use embedded primary sources to serve as evidence for their argument. If your question was about the 1918 influenza, this article would be considered a secondary source, with primary sources inserted within. If, in 50 years, you want to know what newspapers were saying about the 1918 influenza in 2020, then it would be a primary source. It is all about the question.
- **Misconception:** *Primary sources are more reliable than secondary sources.*
- **Reality:** A source's categorization does not equate to its reliability, bias, or quality. Primary sources are often littered with the bias of the creator, and while primary sources do serve as windows into the past, they need to be evaluated from a holistic lens. At times, a secondary source, which corroborates multiple sources, may provide a more real account than a singular primary source. For example, there is a preponderance of evidence that American slavery was horrific; however, a very narrow/limited examination of evidence may mean that you only see a source or two

from [slavery apologists](#) who glorify slavery, or at a minimum, downplay the severity of the institution. This type of primary source in an investigation about American slavery, without corroboration, could lead investigators to draw inaccurate and dangerous conclusions about the subject. When historians construct secondary sources, they first have to corroborate multiple sources like [these](#) to try to gain a more holistic view of slavery.

Having grounded an understanding of sources, let's have some fun with sources made by you (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Library of Congress—Adapted Professional Development Activity Pop-Out

Leaving Evidence Behind

1. Think about all the activities you were involved in during the past 24 hours.
2. List as many of these activities as you can remember on a piece of paper.
3. For each activity on your list, write down what evidence, if any, these activities might have left behind. Examples might include receipts, notes, text messages, security surveillance data, signed credit card documents, voice messages, social media posts, etc.
4. Which of your pieces of evidence would be labeled a primary source?
5. Review your list of evidence left behind and reflect on the following questions:
 - Which of your daily activities were most likely to leave trace evidence behind?
 - What, if any, of that evidence might be preserved for the future? Why?
 - What would a person from the future be able to tell about your life and your society based on evidence of your daily activities that might be preserved for the future? What might be left out?
6. Now, think about a more public event currently happening, such as a court case, election, public controversy, or new law being debated, and think about the following:
 - What kinds of evidence might this event leave behind?
 - Who records information about this event? How might their perspective impact their recording?
 - For what purposes are different records of this event made?
 - What evidence seems most reliable?
7. Think about your 24 hours and compare it to the public event. Is there a different criterion for quality primary and secondary sources? If so, why?

Wrap Up: Reflecting on this brief activity, what is the importance of primary source evidence in social studies, and how might you use this activity in your classroom?

Note. This activity was adapted from a Library of Congress professional development activity. The full activity and supplemental materials are available on the Library of Congress website: www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/professional-development/activities/.

The Aims and Purposes of Teaching With Primary Sources

When you think about a social studies class—or any class for that matter—helping students construct meaning and develop understanding of core content and multiple perspectives is essential. To do this, powerful and authentic narratives need to be analyzed and investigated. Short of taking a field trip to an actual location, can you think of a better way to transport your students back in time than reading diary entries from actual historical figures, watching the same videos children their same age were watching, or listening to a radio broadcast from the exact moment of a life-changing event?

Teaching with primary sources allows a teacher to create classroom experiences that bring history to life and meaningfully engage students in their studies. Primary sources have the ability to leverage the first-hand accounts of history, which make up the rich fabric of the stories that students are studying. Within a classroom, teachers can use primary sources to provide students a space to construct knowledge and grapple with difficult contradictions within the traditional historical narrative. For example, questions such as these can emerge from a primary source:

- Should the United States have used the atomic bomb during World War II?
- How was the institution of slavery antithetical to the Constitution and the principles of democracy?
- How were children impacted by legislative actions regarding work conditions in the 1930s?

Armed with a rabbit-hole-style question and some good sources, a teacher can turn almost any topic into an inquiry-based adventure.

There are a multitude of reasons to engage students in the study of primary sources. Students who engage with primary sources are more likely to develop critical thinking skills (Seixas, 2011; VanSledright, 2011), have the ability to decipher fake news (Breakstone et al., 2018), and engage in deeper, more meaningful classroom inquiry (Reisman, 2012). Engaging in source-driven inquiry also ensures that students do not view historical events and developments from a monocausal lens; instead, sources embed various layers of nuance, causality, and perspectives that impact historic events (Waring & Robinson, 2010). Primary sources allow students to not just study the past but truly engage with it. Sources have the power to transport students to another place and time and allow students to view the world from a different lens. Teachers can utilize primary sources to create lessons that not only teach content but also have students constructing meaning and building their own historical narratives, which will create lasting impressions on the student's ability to think deeply. Further, the Library of Congress (n.d.-b) points out that teaching with primary sources has the ability to

1. Engage students

- Primary sources help students relate in a personal way to events of the past and

promote a deeper understanding of history as a series of human events.

- Because primary sources are snippets of history, they encourage students to seek additional evidence through research.
- First-person accounts of events help make them more real for students, fostering active reading and response.

2. *Develop critical thinking skills*

- Many state standards support teaching with primary sources, which require students to be both critical and analytical as they read and examine documents and objects.
- Primary sources are often incomplete and have little context, so students must use prior knowledge and work with multiple primary sources to find patterns.
- In analyzing primary sources, students move from concrete observations and facts to questioning and making inferences about the materials.
- Questions of creator bias, purpose, and point of view may challenge students' assumptions, allowing students to develop critical thinking skills.

3. *Construct knowledge*

- Inquiry into primary sources encourages students to wrestle with contradictions and compare multiple sources that represent differing points of view, confronting the complexity of the past.
- Students construct knowledge as they form reasoned conclusions, base their conclusions on evidence, and connect primary sources to the context in which they were created, synthesizing information from multiple sources.
- Integrating what students glean from comparing primary sources with what they already know, and what they learn from research, allows students to construct content knowledge and deepen understanding.

With a better understanding of primary sources, let's visit the Library of Congress and explore the resources available to you as a teacher and how you might find them!

The Library of Congress: The Nation's Library!

A Brief History of the Library of Congress

Now that you have a general idea about what primary sources are—and how fantastic they can be—let us explore where you can begin your search for quality sources. Given the expansive nature of topics taught in the classroom, this can feel a bit overwhelming, but we will show you how to navigate the rich primary source collection from the Library of Congress.

If the Library of Congress is new to you, head over to the [History of the Library of Congress](#) to learn more about it. The Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, and it serves as the main research resource for Congress and is home of the U.S. Copyright Office. Beginning with an act of Congress in 1800 that appropriated \$5,000 to purchase books, the Library of Congress has grown to hold over 168 million items in a variety of formats, languages, and subjects. Today, the Library of Congress serves to “preserve and provide access to a rich, diverse and enduring source of knowledge to inform, inspire, and engage you in your intellectual and creative endeavors” (Hayden, n.d. para. 2). For educators especially, the Library of Congress serves as a wealth of resources—including a vast quantity of digitized historical primary sources—that will help inform and engage your students in powerful ways that just might inspire them on a journey within and beyond your classroom. From the fire-blazes of the War of 1812 to oral interviews with formerly enslaved people, to digital albums capturing folk life around the country, the Library of Congress is inarguably a wonderful repository for teachers. Given the Library of Congress and its scope, it is time to talk about how to search and navigate the website for the best results.

What Does the Library of Congress Have to Offer Me? (Hint: Sources!)

A quick glance at the main webpage for the [Library of Congress](#) will reveal the various roles one can take when browsing through the website (e.g., researcher, teacher, visitor, or student). The goal of this section is for you to become a consumer of the Library of Congress as a teacher. Framing our lens in this way will narrow the scope of the website and make it more manageable for you to navigate, aiding you in locating primary sources for use in your classroom.

To exemplify just how much fun (and academically beneficial) finding and using primary sources can be, let us get into some basic search approaches and helpful tips. You will need to open a new tab in your internet browser to really get into the “searching mood,” but do not worry if you are unable to do so at the moment; we will provide an overview in the coming pages of where and how you can find sources.

Look at the image in [Figure 3](#), a screenshot of the Library of Congress homepage from May 2023. On the homepage, you will find carousel of pictures with clickable links, navigation headings along the bottom, and if you continue to scroll down, you'll find trending topics and some primary sources that are featured at that moment. If you look towards the top right, you'll find something of special note—the search box. This is where we recommend beginning your search of sources available to you. Take a few moments and search for a topic that is of interest to a grade or subject you may want to teach in the future. Odds are, you picked a topic like “American History” or “World War II,” something broad and very expansive (see [Figure 4](#)). A wide-ranging search like this will return hundreds of thousands of results, far too many to sort through for a potential lesson or activity. Simply typing in a topic will not yield

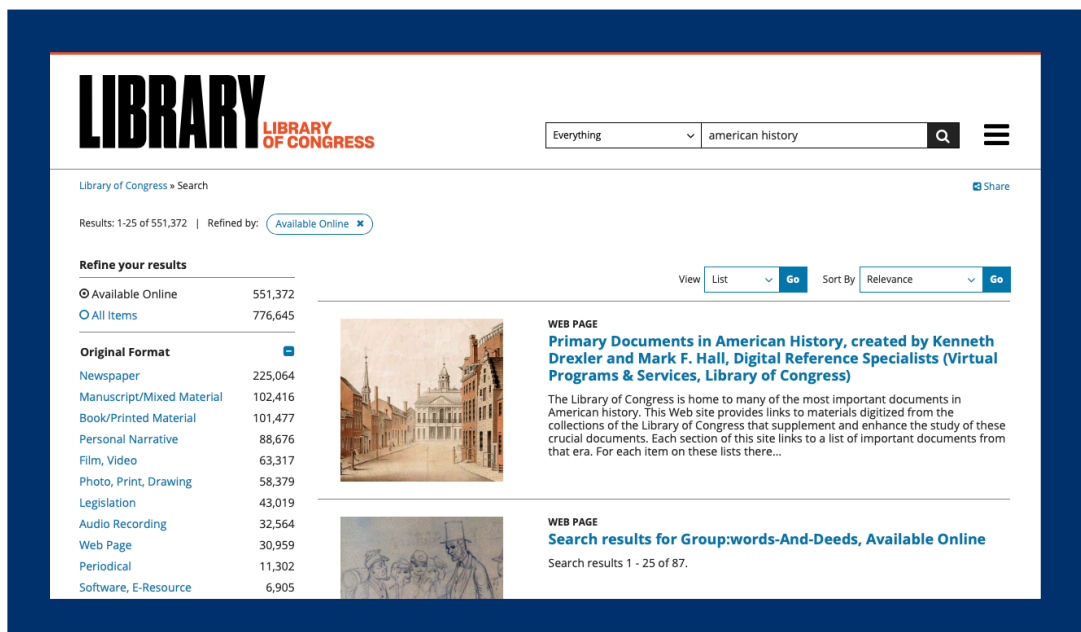
the most beneficial items, but using specific keywords, with proper specifications, will help to ensure that you find what you are looking for in a more streamlined fashion.

Figure 3. *Library of Congress Homepage*



Note. Screenshot from May 2023

Figure 4. *Sample Search Results for “American History”*



A vital component of searching for resources available at the Library of Congress is understanding how the search feature works. This, of course, takes practice. As a teacher, knowing what to search for, what to leave out, and even how phrasing and vocabulary have changed throughout the years becomes very important as the items are tagged based on these terms.

Not Sure of What You Want? Start Here!

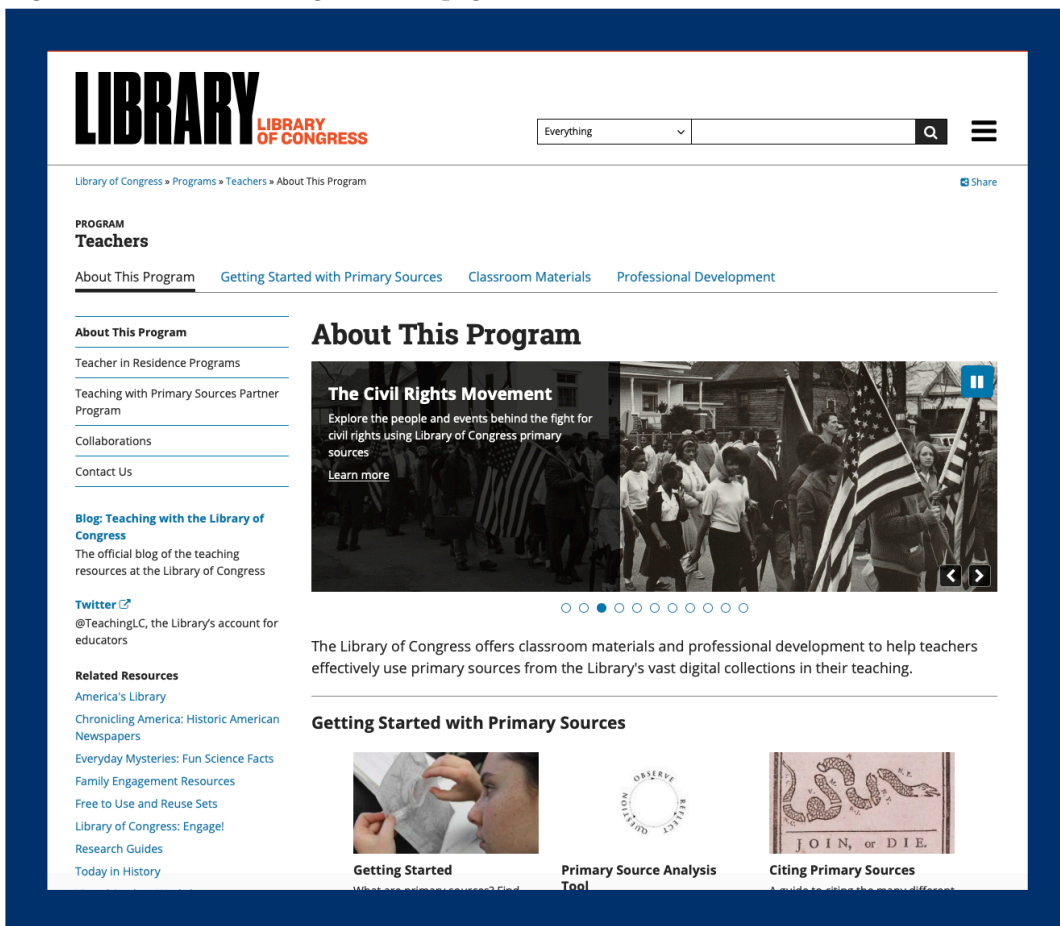
Locating and selecting primary sources to teach social studies is not a skill to take lightly; it is considered a core teaching practice (Fogo, 2014) that involves thinking through how teachers might represent historical knowledge within the curriculum and transform historical content into appropriate instruction for students (Levstik & Barton, 2010; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013). Primary sources serve as the content of any inquiry and assist students in developing content-based claims to answer an inquiry question (Swan et al., 2018). The authors of this book understand the importance of locating and selecting sources and hope to provide you with tools to support your development of this practice through the Library of Congress. This section provides a brief overview of *where* you may find resources on the Library of Congress website when you do not have a specific idea in mind.

The Teachers Page

One of the most helpful aspects of the Library of Congress website is the [Teachers](#) page (see Figure 5). Teachers can access the *Teachers* page by going to the Library’s homepage and clicking on “Teachers” in the bottom center portion of the screen. On the *Teachers* page, you can find everything from classroom resources, curated primary source sets, and information about professional development opportunities from the Library of Congress to build teacher capacity for teaching with primary sources.

There are a variety of links to explore on the *Teachers* page, but let us start with links at the top of the page, highlighted in blue text. Here, you will see *About this Program*, *Getting Started with Primary Sources*, *Classroom Materials*, and *Professional Development*.

Figure 5. *The Teachers Program Homepage*



About This Program

This page provides an overview of the Teaching with Primary Sources program. This page provides a link to the Teaching with the Library of Congress Blog that teachers can subscribe to and have new blogs sent to their inbox. This page also provides information about teacher-in-residence programs, partner programs, and other collaborations.

Collaborations. The Library of Congress awards grants to organizations to create teaching materials using Library primary sources. Some recipients include KidCitizen, State Historical Society of Iowa, and The University of South Florida. There are several projects featured here for students in K–12 classrooms that all include teaching with primary sources.

Teaching with Library of Congress Blog. Educational resource specialists at the Library of Congress maintain this [blog](#) to provide teachers with digitized primary sources for use in their classrooms around any number of topics. Moreover, the authors offer teaching strategies, lesson plans, and other Library of Congress resources that teachers can readily

use within their own classroom. The blogs can be searched by category and are an excellent place to begin researching a topic of inquiry.

Getting Started with Primary Sources

On the top center portion of the [Teachers](#) page, let's explore [Getting Started with Primary Sources](#). This page explains the goals and purposes of teaching with primary sources and provides tools to analyze them. On the left-hand sidebar is the [Finding Primary Sources](#) link. Here, you will find tips on searching the Library of Congress website. On the bottom left of this page are related resources teachers will love: *Today in History* and *Free to Use and Reuse Sets*. The *Today in History* page features a person, place, or event in history for today's date and has a primary source to accompany it. The content changes daily and would serve as a quick and easy way to introduce primary sources into the classroom. *Free to Use and Reuse Sets* feature items from the Library's digital collection. The sources are culled together by themes such as: Writers and Writing, Gardens, LGBTQ+, Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Birthdays, Teachers and Students, Kitchens and Baths, Dragons, the list goes on. The collections will include newspapers, photos, prints, maps, musical scores, and films among others.

This page also provides a [Teacher's Guides and Analysis Tools](#) subpage, linked on the left-hand sidebar. These guides assist students with analyzing any source from documents to audio recordings. Each guide outlines questions to support student analysis and interpretation of the particular source type.

Classroom Materials

On the [Classroom Materials](#) page, you will see links to primary source sets, lesson plans, and presentations. We will provide an overview of what each has to offer below. Remember, these resources can be explored to spark your own ideas of an inquiry topic, to glean more about specific primary sources or topics instead of conducting a general search on the website, or to use directly with students in your classroom. They are definitely worth a look to see if they may be of use to your particular classroom.

Primary Source Sets. These sets are a collection of primary source documents centered on a particular topic. Teachers can search by topic or browse predetermined topics such as "women's suffrage." The primary sources are provided in a thumbnail image along with a link to the source in the Library of Congress, and when teachers scroll to the bottom of the collection, they can see an option to view an accompanying teacher's guide. The teacher's guide for each set provides (a) historical background on the topic for the teacher, (b) suggestions for using the primary sources in the classroom, (c) additional resources within the Library of Congress.

Lesson Plans. The [Lesson Plans](#) page includes a variety of lesson plans that can be searched by topic or era. Each lesson plan includes an overview, objectives, and directions for preparing, teaching, and evaluating the lesson. More importantly, the primary sources to be used in the lesson are already linked inside the lesson plan for easy access. The page currently contains over 100 lesson plans.

Presentations. The resources found on the [Presentations](#) page were developed to help teachers and students use the Library of Congress' online collections. There are links within each presentation that lead to a variety of primary sources on the subtopics. Background information provides context of the time period for a given topic. Each presentation provides a multitude of links directing teachers to digitized primary sources and giving them access to the primary sources that they could use to teach this topic.

Professional Development

From the *Teachers* page, click on the *Professional Development* link. Located on the left-hand sidebar is information about onsite workshops, interactives, webinars, and other activities, including [professional development videos](#). Many of these three- to five-minute videos offer quick insight into topics such as using particular primary source catalogs at the Library of Congress.

You Have an Idea of a Source in Mind. How Do You Find It?

The first step toward teaching with primary sources, whether it is a single source for a comprehension activity or a variety of sources for a historical inquiry, is to locate primary sources that fit within a particular topic you want to teach.

In this section, we show you how to search the website when you have a particular idea in mind. What follows are just a few examples of ways to search within the Library of Congress website. Please know that there is no “right” way to search the Library of Congress. In fact, you may find your own nuanced ways to search the Library of Congress that work for you and your topic of interest that are not described below, and we welcome that.

[Research Guides](#) could be a useful place to start if you do not have a specific topic in mind but want to explore particular time periods, events, or identified historical themes. Browsing the alphabetized list is the first step, and once you find a collection that piques your interest, you can explore this collection in more depth.

Search Tip: When conducting your searches, look for the “available online” filter on the left-hand side of the website under the heading “access condition.” Though it may not work for all formats, it can prove to be a helpful tool at times to ensure your materials can be viewed online.

Searching the Entire Library of Congress

Teachers can go to the Library’s homepage and type in a search word or term for which they know they want to find a related primary source. The search box will use whatever words are entered to search across most of the webpages managed by the Library of Congress. The search results will provide a varied selection of records and resources that may or may not be helpful. One unique feature of the search box is the “smart search” feature; once you start typing, “smart search” will populate a list of suggested terms to use that may result in a more successful search. Once you enter a term into the search box, a list of webpages and records with this term will appear. You can skim through the items to quickly determine if something looks useful, or you may choose to refine your search. On the left-hand side of the screen, you can choose to refine your search results by format (e.g., periodical, manuscript, video recording, map, etc.), date, subtopic, location, or access condition, as described above. You can also refine the search results by the part of the Library of Congress where the item is located (e.g., the Online Catalog, Prints and Photographs Division, General Collections, etc.). It should be noted that the search results can be populated to appear in a few formats: list view, which displays items in a scrollable list; gallery view, which displays large thumbnails with titles of each item; and grid view, which displays larger thumbnail images of the items with no titles, perhaps useful for looking at photographs during a general search.

After locating at least one item that could be applicable to your topic, it might be helpful to review that item’s record. Within the item record, look for the subject headings provided for the item. These alternative terms can be applied to conduct other general searches for items similar to this one and are helpful in propelling your search forward. For example, when searching for items related to the “Dust Bowl,” alternative search terms like “FDR,” “migrant camps,” or “WPA projects” might be useful in locating primary sources on your topic. In addition, further down within the item’s record, you will see the source collection where the item is housed within the Library of Congress. This collection might be helpful in conducting a more specific search later. Lastly, toward the bottom of the record, you will find related items of interest to explore.

Searching Digital Collections

From the Library’s main page, you can access the [Digital Collections](#). You may choose to search all the digital collections, or you may find it helpful to search the digital collections within a particular Library of Congress division (such as prints and photographs, manuscript, music, American Folklife Center, geography and maps, etc.). You may even choose to narrow a

search to a particular division or two, depending on the particular format you are looking for in your search. We recommend checking out a variety of the division's digital collections, as you will want to locate various types of primary sources (i.e., images, videos, maps, etc.) so that your students can access them and make meaning of them in your curriculum.

When searching the digital collections, you will not locate individual records of items but rather collections. You will then need to determine which collections are viable for exploring. Once you locate a collection, click on it and you will see a search bar at the top of the page with a dropdown menu that has pre-selected "this collection." Make sure you then use your search terms in this search box and that "this collection" is selected so that it searches only the selected collection you have chosen. You may also review the "about this collection" introduction for a background on the collection, including its contents and authors. This may be worth checking out before searching to determine if the collection will be a fit for your topic.

Searching the *Teachers* Page

The *Teachers* page, as mentioned in the previous section, provides a starting place for those who may not have a specific search topic in mind. If you do have a specific topic in mind, you may begin with either the primary source sets, lesson plans, or presentations for your selected query. You may find a curated set of primary sources that could be used within your classroom, or you may locate a few primary sources on your topic that, upon examination of their record, will lead you to conduct a more specific search for other items on that topic. Either way, these valuable resources are worth searching to locate ready-made collections of primary sources or individual ones, as well as aid you in conducting further searches based on the items' records found.

Searching the Library of Congress Blogs

One of our favorite starting points in searching the Library of Congress is the *Blogs* page, which can be found on the main page by clicking [Blogs](#) next to the *Teachers* link. There are several blog links posted here with links to the most recent posts from each division. Each blog is maintained by a different division within the Library of Congress and therefore will pertain to different topics. Given your role as an educator, we strongly encourage you to check out the following blogs:

- [Picture This: Library of Congress Prints & Photos](#)
- [Worlds Revealed: Geography & Maps at the Library of Congress](#)
- [Headlines and Heroes: Newspapers, Comics and More Fine Print](#)
- [Inside Adams: Science, Technology, & Business](#)

All the blog posts are meant to spark curiosity on a given subject and highlight fascinating and intriguing primary sources within the Library of Congress related to that subject. The blogs are a place for you to engage with a subject area and learn about the accessible primary

sources the Library of Congress has available to bring that subject to life for students. If you already have a topic in mind, you can begin with the blogs listed above. The search bar will allow you to search a particular blog to see if there is a post about your topic. Doing so might provide you with background knowledge, suggested search terms, and collections to search, as well as a few primary sources that fit your topic.

Searching Library of Congress Special Projects or Collaborations

The Library of Congress has some unique collections that are worth checking out when conducting a search. First, the American Folklife Center has embarked on a project—with generous support from Congress—to collect, preserve, and make accessible the personal accounts of American war veterans through the [Veterans History Project](#). The project collects first-hand account materials such as correspondences, written memoirs, and audio- or video-recorded interviews from veterans who served as early as World War I through the Iraq War. You can search the online database and even refine your search by the conflict/era, branch of service, gender, etc. You can also limit your search to the digitized collection, so you have access to the materials you find.

Second, [Chronicling America](#) is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Library of Congress. It provides access to a searchable database of select U.S. newspapers. There are millions of digitized newspaper pages for you to access. You can search the online database using key terms and narrow your search by state and a range of years. You may also choose to do an advanced search where you can search for an exact or approximate match of words and phrases. The results will populate with a thumbnail image of a newspaper page with the search terms highlighted—a great feature that allows you to focus on the exact sentence/paragraph where your term is used. A helpful tool that can save you time in searching is the *recommended topics* link on the left-hand side of the main page. Here, you will find a list of topics, categorized alphabetically, by subject category, or by date range. The subject categories are particularly helpful as they can provide you with particular topics that you are guaranteed to find within the digitized newspaper pages in order to use them with your students.

Third, the Library of Congress, in collaboration with WGBH in Boston, established the [American Archive of Public Broadcasting](#). The archive was created to digitally preserve and make accessible public radio and television programming with historical significance. There are over 7,000 public radio and television programs digitally available on the website currently. These broadcasts include regional and local programming, local news and public affairs programs, local history productions, and programs that deal with the environment, religion, art, music, and more. You can conduct a general search using the search bar at the top of the main webpage, or you could search the special collections on topics such as abolitionists, LGBTQ+, Civil Rights (i.e., Eyes on the Prize interviews), Civil War, *Woman*

Series, and The Great Depression Interviews. Additionally, for many of the video or audio recordings, transcripts are provided to make the primary sources accessible to all your students—and helpful for you in determining whether a primary source is worth selecting.

When All Else Fails, Ask a Librarian

As you dive into your search, you may come to realize that you need more support sifting through information or finding a specific resource. Fear not; the Library of Congress has you covered! The [Ask a Librarian](#) page (see [Figure 6](#)) allows you to engage with librarians from specific divisions and receive support in finding the resources needed to bring your classroom to life. You can also submit an email form directly to an education specialist within the Library of Congress by selecting the link found on the *Teachers* page. From there, you can ask questions related to the Library of Congress' teacher resources and get assistance in locating primary sources on a topic to teach within your classroom. There may be a turnaround time when submitting a request, so be sure to plan ahead.

Figure 6. *Ask a Librarian*

LIBRARY
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

ASK A LIBRARIAN

The Library of Congress welcomes researchers to its reading rooms and research centers. Appointments are **optional**, but **encouraged** to serve you best, ensure collection material is accessible during your visit and optimize your time at the Library. The Thomas Jefferson Building has reopened to visitors via timed, ticketed entry —[learn how to obtain a timed-entry pass](#). Virtual events and online services continue to be available.

Library of Congress / [Ask a Librarian](#)

Ask a Librarian

Have a question? Need assistance? Our librarians and program specialists are here to help you.

[Ask a Specialist](#) | [Ask a General Question](#) | [Browse Frequently Asked Questions](#)

We encourage you to ask a specialist using one of the links below. To ask a general question or browse our FAQs use the tabs above. Areas offering chat service are indicated using the "chat" icon.

Subjects & Formats

- [Business](#)
- [Film, TV, Video](#)
- [Genealogy, Local History](#)
- [History, Humanities, Social Sciences](#)
- [Law](#)
- [Manuscripts](#)
- [Map, Geography](#)
- [Newspapers, Periodicals, Comic Books](#)
- [Performing Arts](#)
- [Prints and Photographs](#)
- [Rare Books, Special Collections](#)
- [Recorded Sound, Audio](#)

Regions & Languages

- [Africa, Middle East](#)
- [Asia](#)
- [Caribbean, Iberia, Latin America](#)
- [Europe](#)

Programs & Services

- [American Folklife Center](#)
- [Congress.gov](#)
- [Copyright](#)
- [Duplication Services](#)
- [Loan, Reserves, Accounts](#)
- [Services for the Blind and Print Disabled](#)

Other Ways to Connect

We offer online chat service from Monday-Friday, 12:00-4:00 pm (ET).

[Chat is Offline](#)

Related Resources

[Research Guides](#)
Access hundreds of resource guides created by Library of Congress subject experts.

[Video Tutorials](#)
View short tutorials illustrate how to use our many services and research centers.

Digging Deeper With Some Additional Resources

The Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) program awards grants to universities and organizations that develop curriculum and online interactives leveraging primary sources. Many TPS Consortium members create and deliver professional development, extending the reach of the Library of Congress across the country. This means that there is another avenue for you to locate primary sources and accompanying instructional ideas. All of the current [TPS Consortium members](#), along with their websites, are listed on the *Teachers* page. Below, we list a few TPS Consortium members to highlight the variety of ways the Library of Congress resources have been developed for use in the classroom:

1. [TPS Minnesota Historical Society](#) focuses on the use of primary sources to support Ladson-Billings's (1995) Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). It provides readings and videos of this work in action, all demonstrating how primary sources support CRP through (a) challenging students, (b) bringing in “windows and mirrors” (Bishop, 1990) for students to view themselves and others more accurately and honestly, and (c) teaching skills for critical analysis (see the [Inquiry in the Upper Midwest Handout](#)). On their webpage, click on [Primary Source Packets](#) and [Classroom-Ready Resources](#) to find the readings and videos.
2. [TPS Metropolitan State University of Denver](#) program provides annotated resource sets and lesson plans developed by teachers that can be found on the [Primary Sources and Strategies](#) subpage under the *TPS Connect* heading on their main page. In addition, they direct the Western region of the U.S., which funds grants for school districts and organizations to develop primary source professional development and curriculum. These projects can be [viewed by state](#). [The Latino History Project](#) is one example of a grant-funded project, which worked to correct the lack of Latinx history and culture in schools and textbooks. [Their website](#) provides primary source sets for teaching a more inclusive Latinx history.
3. [TPS Eastern Region](#), directed by Waynesburg University, has compiled lesson ideas, activities, and plans that cover a variety of topics. In addition, they have a link to the [Eastern Region projects](#) on their homepage. There, you will find specific state projects with links to resources.
4. [TPS Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#) provides short readings on instructional strategies like Gallery Walks, Pass-Backs, and See-Think-Wonder that are worth reviewing for ideas on how to use primary sources from the Library of Congress.

Wrapping Up

Within this text, the authors are looking to provide a basis for how you may incorporate primary sources for deep inquiry into your future classrooms. With a focus on inquiry and primary sources, the subsequent chapters explore how an educator can leverage the Library of Congress and other organizations' repositories of primary and secondary sources—from the planning process, to sample implementations, to purposeful assessment. Teaching can be challenging. This book will not give you all the answers, but what it will give you are tools to add to your practitioner tool belt. These are tools that will help promote critical thinking, authentic inquiry, and engaged learners.

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