Welcome to the Johnson and Wales University Denver Campus Library. In this tutorial, we will define primary sources and demonstrate how to find them in the Library’s databases.

Primary sources are original materials; often first person accounts by people who experienced or witnessed an event. They present original thinking, report a discovery, or share new information. These sources have not been previously published or interpreted by someone else; they are materials on which other research is based. Examples include: scientific studies, speeches or lectures, original artwork, letters, diaries, and historical documents such as the Bill of Rights.

To locate primary sources in the Library’s database, Academic Search Complete, start at our homepage. In the Quick Links box, click Databases A-Z. From the listing, select Academic Search Complete.

If you are off-campus, you will be prompted to enter your JWU wildcat email and password before you can access the database.

Academic Search Complete’s interface includes many options for limiting your search results, including limiting to primary sources. Under Search Options, in the Publications Type box, select Primary Source Documents. Next, enter your keywords into the search box and select the search button.

The results that appear should include only primary sources. Some results may include only the abstract or summary, not the full-text, of the source. You can limit results to full-text only by checking the Full-Text box on the left side of the screen.

In other databases to which the library subscribes, the option to limit to primary sources may not be as obvious. If you do not see a primary source limiter, look for options to limit by interviews, speeches, letters, science experiments or other types of primary sources.

You can also determine if a resource is a primary by looking in the abstract or summary for keywords such interview, speech, lecture, original research or other form of a primary document.

If you are still uncertain about distinguishing primary sources from secondary or tertiary sources, the Library has a primary vs. secondary sources guide listed within the Research Process guide. You can find the guide at: http://den.library.jwu.edu/researchprocess

If you need help, assistance is available in person, on the phone, via email, chat or text. Go to the Denver Campus Library homepage at den.library.jwu.edu for more information.