

## How to Find Primary Sources in the Humanities & Social Sciences

### Finding Primary Sources Relating to an Individual

Politicians, authors, artists, composers, activists, and other famous (and sometimes not-so-famous) individuals often have their *correspondence*, professional papers, *diaries*, *memoirs*, *manuscripts*, and other writings collected in books. The easiest way to find these *documents* is to search the library catalog for the person as an author. To do this:

- Access the Library Catalog from the library's [website](#):



- On the second line of the catalog search box, next to “author,” type your person’s name:

Catalog Advanced Search

all fields(keyword) ▼		And ▼
<b>author</b> ▼	theodore roosevelt	And ▼

- When you complete your search, you will have a list of books written by your author or a list of books in which the author’s shorter works have been collected.

### To find even more by individuals:

- Repeat your search in [WorldCat](#) to find items that Dickinson does not own. To access WorldCat, click on the “Databases” link library’s [website](#), then scroll all the way to the bottom of the database list, and click on WorldCat to access the database.
- Once in the database, type your person’s name on the first line of WorldCat’s search box, and, next to it, change Keyword to Author.

WorldCat (Updated: 2007-10-02)  
OCLC catalog of books and other materials in libraries worldwide

theodore roosevelt Author

- After you find a book you’d like to use, go back to the library’s website, click on the “Borrow From Other Libraries” link under Quick Links, and use [PALCI](#) (our Interlibrary Loan service) to obtain the item from one of Dickinson’s partner libraries.

### **Finding Primary Sources Collected in Books**

Primary sources such as *treaties*, *political correspondence*, *photographs*, works of art, *letters*, excerpts from *diaries*, *speeches*, *oral histories*, and *interviews* are often reproduced in books that analyze the source within a larger context. To find these sources:

- Access the library catalog.
- Type the keywords relating to your topic on the first search line. Examples of search phrases might be “American history” or “Risorgimento” or “Impressionism” (without quotes).
- Change the second search field from “author” to “all fields (keyword)” and, next to it, type the phrase “documents or sources” (without quotes). Your search screen should look like this:

- When you complete your search you will see a list of books that most likely have primary sources in the back of the book, or interspersed throughout the book.

### **To find even more documents collected in books:**

- Repeat your search in [WorldCat](#) to find items that Dickinson does not own. To access WorldCat, click on the “Databases” link from the “Quick Links” section of the library’s [website](#), then scroll all the way to the bottom of the database list.

- After you find a book you’d like to use, go back to the library’s website, click on the “Borrow From Other Libraries” link under Quick Links, and use [PALCI](#) (our Interlibrary Loan service) to obtain the item from one of Dickinson’s partner libraries.

### **Finding Primary Sources in Databases**

The Dickinson College library provides access to databases that contain nothing but primary sources.

- Access the library Databases list the library's [website](#):
- Once on the Find a Database page, select the "Databases by Format" tab at the top of the page. Then, select "Archival and Primary Source Collections" from the list of links:

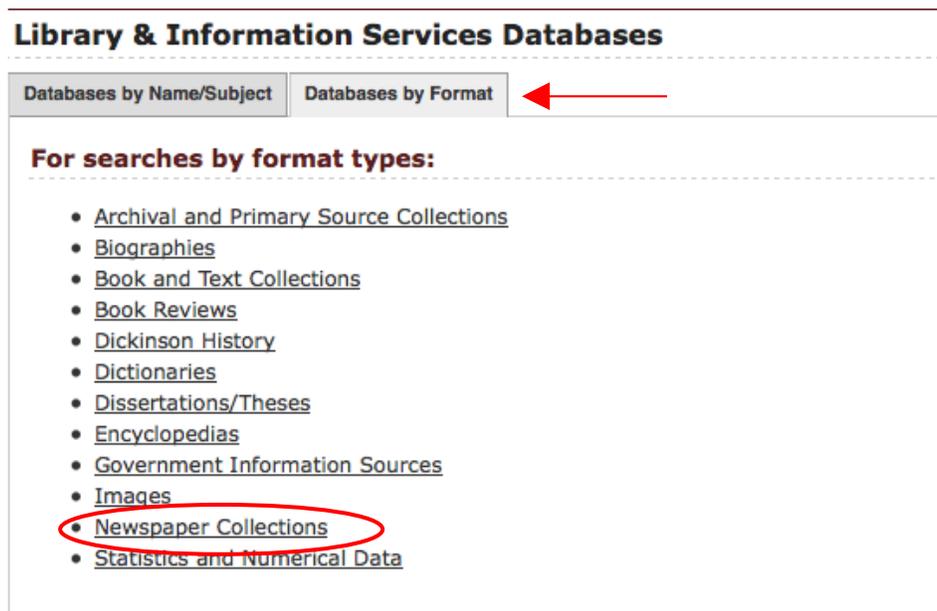


- You will see a list of databases that provide direct access to historical and contemporary primary sources. Please read the descriptions carefully to make sure the databases cover the correct subject and time periods for your research project.
- Be sure to check this list often as we frequently add new databases to our collection.

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### **Finding Newspaper Articles**

- Access the library Databases list the library's [website](#):
- Once on the Find a Database page, select the "Databases by Format" tab at the top of the page. Then, select "Newspaper Collections" from the list of links:



- You will see a list of databases that provide direct access to historical and current newspaper articles, including the [New York Times](#) from 1851.
- Be sure to check this list often as we frequently add new databases to our collection.

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### **Library of Congress Subject Subdivisions**

The subheadings listed below are used in library catalogs under names of persons treated as subjects. Although applied inconsistently, they are often an indicator of primary source materials.

- **Anecdotes** [used for collections of brief narratives of true incidents from the individual's life]
- **Correspondence** [used for the letters from and/or to the person]
- **Friends and associates** [used for discussions of a person's close and immediate contacts, such as companions, co-workers]
- **Interviews** [transcripts of what was said during the course of interviews or conversations]
- **Quotations** [used for collections or discussions of quotations by or about the person]
- **Sources** [used under names of persons for works discussing the individual's sources of ideas or inspiration for his endeavors or creative works, and for collections of those source materials]
- **Written works** [used for persons active in the fine arts, for their non-literary textual works. Not used for persons also known as literary authors.]
- **Diaries**
- **Discography**
- **Manuscripts**
- **Notebooks, sketchbooks, etc.**
- **Documents**
- **Telephone calls**