IMPORTANT NOTE: The types of information that can be considered primary sources may vary depending on how you are using the source and the nature of your research.

A few examples:
- A magazine article reporting on recent studies linking the reduction of energy consumption to the compact fluorescent light bulb would be a secondary source.
- A research article or study proving this would be a primary source.

If you are studying how compact fluorescent light bulbs are presented in the popular media, the magazine article could be considered a primary source.

**Primary Sources**
Primary sources are original materials. They are from the time period involved and have not been filtered through interpretation or evaluation. Primary sources are original materials on which other research is based. They present original thinking, report a discovery, or share new information.

**Examples include:**
- Artifacts (furniture, tools, clothing)
- Audio recordings (e.g. radio programs)
- Diaries
- Internet communications on email, listservs
- Letters
- Newspaper articles written at the time
- Proceedings of a meeting, conference and symposia
- Speeches
- Survey Research (e.g. market surveys, public opinion polls)

**Secondary Sources**
Secondary sources are generally accounts written after the fact. They are interpretations and evaluations of primary sources. Secondary sources are not evidence, but commentary on and discussion of evidence.

**Examples include:**
- Bibliographies (also considered tertiary)
- Biographical works
- Commentaries, criticisms
- Dictionaries, Encyclopedias (also considered tertiary)
- Web site (also considered primary)
- Journal Articles
- Magazine and newspaper articles

Continued on back side
**Tertiary Sources**

Tertiary sources consist of information which is a distillation and collection of primary and secondary sources.

**Examples include:**
- Almanacs
- Dictionaries and Encyclopedias (also considered secondary)
- Bibliographies (also considered secondary)
- Fact books
- Chronologies
- Textbooks (also considered secondary)

**Comparison of Types of Sources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY</th>
<th>SECONDARY</th>
<th>TERTIARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painting by Monet</td>
<td>Article critiquing art piece</td>
<td>ArtStor database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Einstein's diary</td>
<td>Book on Einstein's life</td>
<td>Dictionary on Theory of Relativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patent</td>
<td>NTIS database</td>
<td>Manual on using invention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters by Martin Luther King</td>
<td>Web site on King’s writings</td>
<td>Encyclopedia on Civil Rights Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes taken by clinical psychologist</td>
<td>Magazine article about the psychological condition</td>
<td>Textbook on clinical psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movie filmed in 1942</td>
<td>Biography of the director</td>
<td>Guide to the movie</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From: University Libraries, University of Maryland – Primary Secondary and Tertiary Sources
http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/primary-sources.html#catalog