Resources: Learning about Primary Source Research

This guide presents a list of resources that may assist you in crafting an effective primary source research strategy. It is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to the practice of historiography, nor does it focus solely on using the collections housed at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library. This guide refers readers to general resources that are readily accessible online and that introduce research methods specific to working with archival and manuscript material.

Guides for finding historical and biographical information related to the Roosevelt era are available to view or download at the FDR Library’s More Online Resources page: http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/resources.html. You may also wish to explore the National Archives listings for Research By Selected Topic at http://www.archives.gov/research/start/by-topic.html

This document presents 4 main categories of resources:

1. The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library Research Guide
2. National Archives
3. Other Internet Resources
4. Online Document Searching

I. For Students: The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library Research Guide

Developed for teachers and students working to plan and perform a research assignment, this guide covers the following topics:

- The nature of research
- Clarifying your task
- Actually getting started
- Developing critical thinking skills
- Using primary sources

Download this research guide at the following web address: http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/education/resources/research_guide.pdf.

Or, contact Jeff Urbin, Education Specialist at the FDR Library and Museum, to obtain a print copy by mail.

Jeff Urbin
Franklin D. Roosevelt Library & Museum
4079 Albany Post Road
Hyde Park, NY 12538
(845) 486-7761
jefferey.urbin@nara.gov
II. National Archives

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) offers many internet-based resources to assist first time researchers interested in its holdings. While these pages are very helpful for starting work with NARA materials, much of the following information within the Archives.gov website speaks to best practices in research methods and is therefore not limited to working within the infrastructure of the National Archives.

Introduction for First Time Visitors
http://www.archives.gov/research/start/introduction.html

New to Archival Research?
http://www.archives.gov/research/start/

Research Tools and Ways to Search Online
http://www.archives.gov/research/tools/index.html

Tips for Successful Research
http://www.archives.gov/research/start/research-tips.html

Research Presidential Materials
http://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/research/
III. Other Internet Resources

Below is a short list linking to various tutorials, tips, and other generally useful information. These links, compiled from a several academic, professional, and informal sources, present a variety of angles and advice on the topic of research. The FDR Library does not necessarily endorse their content or expressed opinions.

http://www.archivists.org/glossary/index.asp

Using Primary Sources on the Web – R.U.S.A., American Library Association
http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/rusa/sections/history/resources/pubs/usingprimarysources/index.cfm

What are Archives? – Smithsonian Archives Center
http://americanhistory.si.edu/archives/a-1.htm

Archival Research Tutorial – University of British Columbia
http://www.library.ubc.ca/spcoll/Guides_UBC/Index.html

Online Tutorial, Archival Research Techniques and Skills – National Archives (UK)
http://www.arts-scheme.co.uk/pre.htm

Primary Sources – Yale University Libraries
http://www.yale.edu/collections_collaborative/primarysources/primarysources.html

Primary Sources – University of Oregon Libraries
http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/history/primary.html

A Survival Guide to Archival Research
http://www.historians.org/Perspectives/Issues/2004/0412/0412arc1.cfm

Primary Sources – Wikipedia
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_source
IV. Online Document Searching

Below are some internet destinations where you can begin searching for archival material. Some can link you directly to digitized documents and others provide online catalogs of non-digital materials.

Digitized Historical Materials - FDR Presidential Library & Museum
http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/collections.html

Archival Research Catalog (ARC) – NARA
http://www.archives.gov/research/arc

American Memory – Library of Congress
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html

The Library of Congress on Flickr (public domain photographs)

Smithsonian Institution Research Information System (SIRIS)
http://www.siris.si.edu/

Ready Net Go! Archival Internet Resources
http://www.tulane.edu/~lmiller/ArchivesResources.html

Our Documents

The Presidential Timeline
http://www.presidentialtimeline.org

The American Presidency Project
http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/index.php

The New Deal Network
http://newdeal.feri.org/index.htm