

# Evaluating Primary Sources Online

## Cultural Heritage Websites

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### **Is the website from a trusted repository?**

A cultural organization like a museum, library, archive? An educational institution? A government agency?

### **Are you looking at an individual item (one source), or a collection (many sources)?**

If a collection looks useful, are the actual items within it relevant to your research?

If an item looks useful, is it part of a bigger collection? Are other items in the collection relevant?

### **Is the item actually a primary source?**

This will of course depend on your research question.

Digital exhibitions or curricula may combine primary sources with secondary sources.

### **Can you get to the source (an item) itself? See it, read it, hear it, watch it?**

Download the file, if possible, and/or note the permalink.

### **Is there accompanying metadata? Title, creator, date, description, subjects, etc.?**

Though far from perfect, credible metadata from trusted organizations gives some assurance that the item is what we think it is. This information will help you understand the source, and is key to citing it later.

Clicking on a subject heading link is also a great way to find more useful sources.

### **Is the source born-digital or has it been digitized?**