Module 2.7 Finding Primary Sources

The University of Alberta Libraries holds many primary sources in its print and electronic collections. Finding them requires a conscious effort in choosing the searching tool and the words used to describe the primary source.

There are two main strategies for finding primary sources: library guides and databases and the Library Catalogue.

1. Library Guides & Databases

The Library guide on Primary Sources outlines the main primary source formats and how to locate them in the UAL's collections. The Primary Source Libguide lists a number of databases useful for finding primary sources. Check the appropriate tab to determine which database is best suited to your search or consult a librarian using the AskUs button at the top right-hand corner of the UAL website.

If you were to search for primary sources from Winston Churchill, you would start in the Primary Sources guide. You would click on the Europe tab, then under Official & Government Information there is a database entitled *Churchill Archive: A Window on History*.

Various other library guides will point out databases that contain primary sources, for example the newspapers guide or the subject guides.

2. Library Catalogue:

When searching for primary sources in the library catalogue, the **Advanced Search** form will be most effective. Use the **subject** field to list the type of primary source you need, for example **correspondence OR diaries OR personal narratives OR speeches**. Please note that the subject terms must be searched exactly as they appear in the guide. Next, in another subject field, add the name of the person or the event that constitute the main focus of the source. For example, combine the primary source format with an event or person, such as **Winston Churchill**.