

## Introduction to UNB Libraries: Workbook #3: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Sources, 1,2,3...3,2,1

This session focuses on the various sources used in historical research, and the publication cycle that generates them. We refer to these source types by ordinal numbers: primary, secondary and tertiary. At the end of this session, you will be able to:

- Identify research sources as either primary, secondary, or tertiary
- Know when to use each type of research source
- Know where to find each type of research source

This session is called 1, 2, 3, ... 3, 2, 1 because it represents the sequences in the cycle of scholars' knowledge generation and publication of research results, along with students' steps in gaining access to that information. While ideas and evidence in history are published as primary, then secondary, then tertiary sources, students often come to understand those ideas by working backward through that same sequence, using first tertiary, then secondary, then primary sources.

**Primary sources** in history are documents that were created during the era being studied. You might consider some of these as eyewitness accounts. Some examples of primary sources are diaries, letters, official documents, oral histories, or legislation. Some primary sources are personal, while others are institutional or governmental. News reports of an event, written at the time, are also considered primary sources.

**Secondary sources** are the work of historians who use primary sources as part of their research, and create interpretations of history based upon them. A historian may write an article or book on the treatment of slaves in New Brunswick during the late 1700s. In researching this topic, he will probably study many other historian's articles, and also documents like the *Ward Chipman Slavery Brief* (see <http://lib.unb.ca/Texts/NBHistory/chipman/index.html>), an account of the trial in 1800 to grant freedom to a slave named Nancy. The *Ward Chipman Slavery Brief* is a primary source, a verbatim account of the trial, created at the time of the event. The historian's article will be a secondary source, written after the time in question and pulling together various sources of information to draw conclusions about the past.

**Tertiary sources** are further syntheses of a topic, and can be found in encyclopedias, research handbooks, historical dictionaries, chronologies, and bibliographies. If you know little about a topic, tertiary sources are a good place to start. For instance, if you want to start learning about slavery and emancipation in North America, you might look at the [\*Encyclopedia of Emancipation and Abolition in the Transatlantic World\*](#) (HIL-REF HT985 .E53 2007), because it provides a broad overview of the progress toward emancipation, and describes key events and people. If you were reading about the *Ward Chipman Brief*, and wanted to know more about Ward Chipman, you might read the [entry about him](#) in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, another tertiary source. Normally, tertiary sources are used to orient us as we approach a research area, or to clarify questions that may arise when we work with primary or secondary sources.

## Finding Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Sources

There are several strategies to use in finding various source types. If you use the general [Subject Guide for History](#), you will see that the tabs group materials as either Reference Sources, Books, Journal Articles or Primary Sources (fig. 1).

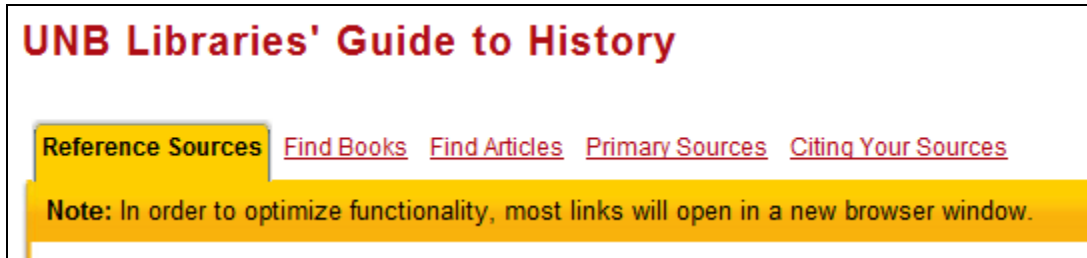


Figure 1

Reference Sources are, for the most part, tertiary. Books and articles, unless written during the time period being researched, are secondary sources. The Primary Sources tab contains a number of online collections of primary sources that are owned by the library, but these are not the only primary sources available to you.

### Finding Primary Sources:

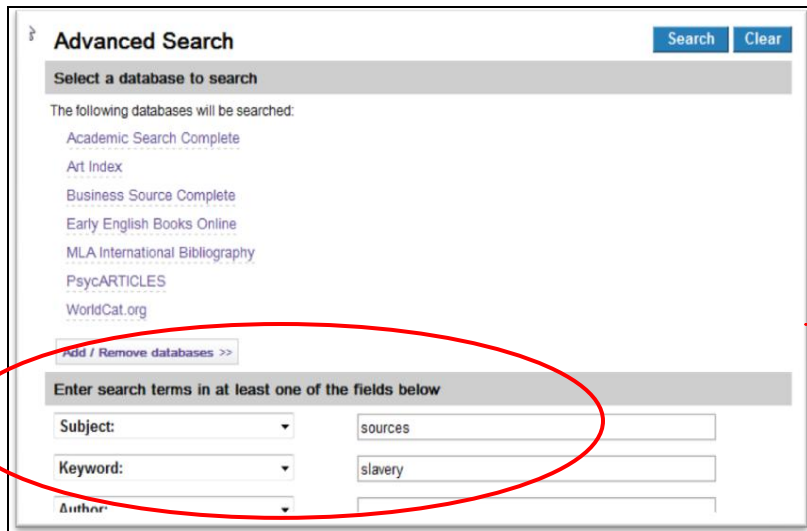


Figure 2: UNB WorldCat's Advanced Search Screen

To find primary sources, several techniques are available to you. In the library catalogue, the word “sources” in the subject field is often used by cataloguers to indicate that historical material is a primary source. In UNB WorldCat, switch to the Advanced Search Screen, and try combining a ‘sources’ subject search with words to describe the topic for which you need primary sources. See Figure 2. Other subject terms you should try include *diaries*, *personal narratives*, *interviews*, and *correspondence*. Of course, the publication date of a work is another factor in deciding whether or not a work is a primary source for a particular study.

Another option for finding primary sources is to use the [Subject Guide for History](#), which has a tab for primary sources that are available online through UNB Libraries. Figure 3 shows some of the collections of primary sources that are available through the subject guide. Some of these collections are simply the texts themselves, while others include very helpful, contextual essays to help you use the material.

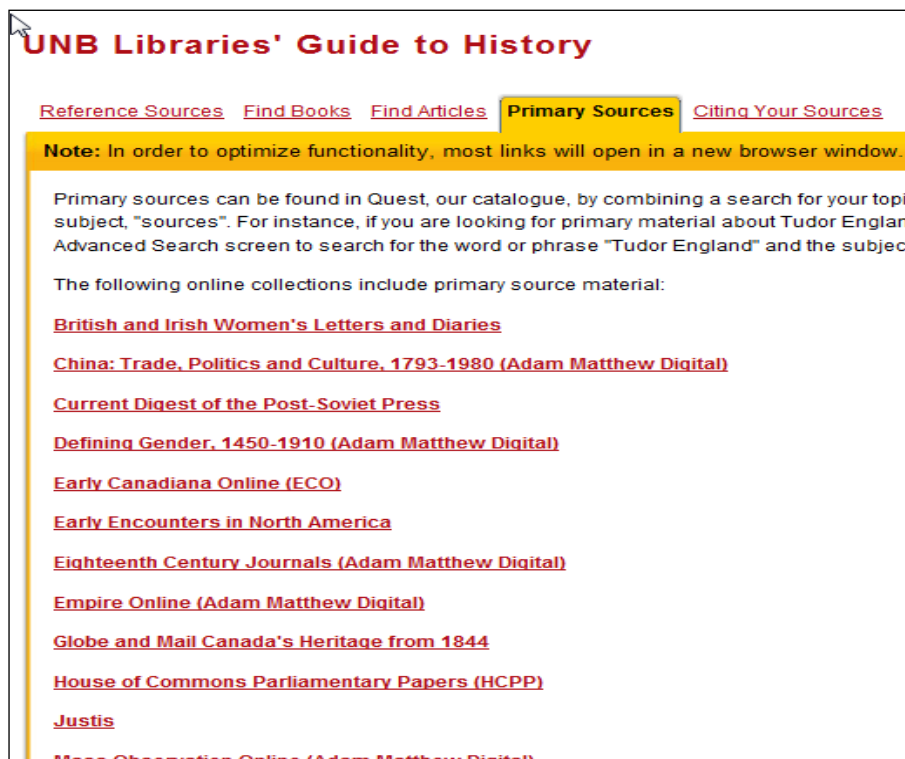


Figure 3: Primary Sources in the History Subject Guide

### LC Classification Scheme

- D - History (General)
- DA - Great Britain
- DAW - Central Europe
- DB - Austria - Liechtenstein - Hungary - Czechoslovakia
- DC - France - Andorra - Monaco
- DD - Germany
- DE - Greco-Roman World
- DF - Greece
- DG - Italy - Malta
- DH - Low Countries - Benelux Countries
- DJ - Netherlands (Holland)
- DJK - Eastern Europe (General)
- DK - Russia. Soviet Union. Former Soviet Republics - Poland
- DL - Northern Europe. Scandinavia
- DP - Spain - Portugal
- DQ - Switzerland
- DR - Balkan Peninsula
- DS - Asia
- DT - Africa
- DU - Oceania (South Seas)
- DX - Romanias
- E11-143 - America
- E151-904 - United States
- F1-975 - United States local history
- F1001-1145.2 - British America (including Canada), Dutch America
- F1170 - French America
- F1201-3799 - Latin America. Spanish America

A third method involves browsing through the Reference department stacks (HIL-REF), looking for books in your subject area with titles that include the words *bibliography*, *guide*, or *sources*. If you understand the [LC classification scheme](#) used to shelve books (see Scheme at left), your stack browsing will be more fruitful. The bibliographies and guides you find will probably not contain the sources themselves, but will list titles of archival materials that you can then track down in the Library's collection or in an online archive. Many collections of archival material have been digitized, and even a Google search can find them. Be aware of the origin of any online archive you use; archives hosted by .edu sites tend to be more reliable. A good online repository is the [Internet History Sourcebooks Project](#) at Fordham University.

If you would like to find historical newspaper stories, advertisements or other popular accounts, the Library subscribes to several digital newspaper archives that may help you. The Journals and Newspapers tab lets you select [Newspaper Packages](#) (fig. 4). Some of these packages include archival material going back to the mid-1700s, including *Globe and Mail: Canada's Heritage from 1844*, *Proquest Historical Newspapers*, and *Times Digital Archives*.

The screenshot shows a library website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'All', 'Article & Research Databases', 'Reference Materials', 'Journals & Newspapers', and 'e-Books'. Below these is a search bar with the text 'Browse newspaper collections. Search or browse for individual newspaper titles.' The main section is titled 'Browse Newspaper Collections' and lists several options:

- Canadian Newspapers FULLTEXT (FP Infomart)** [details] [View newspapers in collection]: This database offers fulltext access to a variety of Canadian newspapers, (coverage dates vary New Brunswick newspapers, The Daily Gleaner, The Telegraph Journal, and The Moncton Times have coverage from 1998-date. For assistance, please contact library . . .
- Eureka (formerly NewsScan)** [details] [View newspapers in collection]: Searches The Chronicle-Herald, The Sunday Herald, L'Acadie Nouvelle, The Transcrip, The Fredericton Daily Gleaner, Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick) over 1000 other news and business information sources. . . .
- Globe and Mail Canada's Heritage from 1844** [details] [View newspapers in collection]: Canada's Heritage from 1844 contains complete coverage of The Globe and Mail through December 2000. Coverage includes major events in Canada, classifieds, cartoons, birth/death notices and the full content of The Globe and Mail.
- Globe and Mail, The (Canadian Newsstand)** [details] [View newspapers in collection]: Canadian Newsstand provides access to Canadian newspapers and a search interface. Currently UNB Libraries subscribes ONLY to the Globe and Mail.
- Library Press Display** [details] [View newspapers in collection]: 1400 full-colour and full-image newspapers from more than 82 countries. Newspapers are searchable and have a rolling 60 day archive.
- Naver News Library** [details] [View newspapers in collection]: Naver News Library is a full-text Korean newspaper article database. Newspapers: Tonga ilbo 東亞日報 = Dong-A ilbo (1920-1999); K Shinmun (1946-1999); . . .
- ProQuest Digital Microfilm** [details] [View newspapers in collection]: . . .

On the right side of the screenshot, there is a preview of historical newspaper text from 'The Times' dated 1785. The text includes several advertisements and notices:

- By Mr. BROWN,** On the Premises, No. 29, St. Martin's Lane, Cannon-Street, on Thursday, January 13, 1785, and the following day, at Twelve o'Clock, by Order of the Executor of Mr. Wm. DE GERSEY, MERCHANT, deceased. THE valuable LEASE of the convenient DWELLING-HOUSE, Counting-house, &c. in excellent repair, (suitable for the immediate reception of a Merchant, or any other genteel Family) together with the Household Furniture, Plate, Linens, China, Books, fine old Red Port, and various other Effects. To be viewed and sold Wednesday the 14th instant, and to the time of Sale. Catalogues and Particulars may be had of Mr. Brown, Broker and Auctioneer, George-Yard, Lombard-Street.
- By THOMAS GRIFFITH,** On the Premises, on Monday the 3d Day of January, at Eleven o'Clock, by Order of the Assignees of Mr. Edward Wilson, Carpenter, a Bankrupt, at his Work-shop near the Surrey New Road, Blackfriars-Bridge. ALL his Stock of Deals, Battens, Work-benches, and Tools; a handsome Frontpiece, with turned Columns and Pilasters, with ornamental Caps, Bases, and Fates. Also, at One o'Clock will be Sold all his Stock and other Effects, at his Yard and Premises near the Grange Road, Bermondsey; comprising Deals, Battens, Quartering-posts, and Rails, a Chaise, a Cart, some Harness, Hay, and other Effects. At the same Time will be Sold the Lease of the above Yard and Premises, with a Field and Garden, and the Improvements made on the same are held for a Term of Years at a low Rent. May be viewed on Saturday, when Catalogues may be had on the Premises, and of Mr. GRIFFITH, Sworn Exchange-broker, Red-cross-Street, Southwark.
- For Sale by PRIVATE CONTRACT.** The good Brigantine YOUNG SABINE. A MOST extraordinary swift Sailer, Plantation built, Burthen 240 Tons, more or less, copper-sheathed in this River, is a very excellent Vessel for any Trade that requires Expedition; would make an excellent Packet, and is capable of mounting 16 guns six-pouuders—is extraordinary well-built, and is the only Vessel that made a Passage from Malaga this Season, now lying at Pickle-herring Stairs, Henry McLees, Commander. For Inventories and other Particulars, please to apply to THOMAS HUBBERT, Broker.
- WANTS A PLACE,** A YOUNG MAN, about twenty years of age, as Footman in a small family, or single gentleman, either in or out of livery; and as he has been used to travail, will have no objection to go abroad with either; can shave and dress hair, and speaks the French language tolerably well, and understands the care of horses, and every other qualification becoming a servant; and can be well recommended from his last place for honesty, sobriety, and cleanliness and carefulness, &c. For enquiry please to direct to R. B. at Mr. Sandar's, Hair-dresser, No. 11, James-street, Hay-market.
- WANTS A PLACE,** A YOUNG WOMAN as COOK, in a small genteel family; has no objections to go abroad; can have an undeniable character from a respectable family where she now lives.—For particulars, a line directed to A. Z. at Mr. Peacock's, newsmen, No. 9, Bell-Yard, Temple-Bar, shall be attended to.
- TO LET,** small Lodgings Gentely Furnished, for a Single Gentleman, in a house where there are no children. Enquire at No. 6, Staple Inn Building, Middle-Row, Holborn.

At the bottom of the preview, it says 'MING. PRINTING-HOUSE SQUARE. BLACKFRIARS: where Advertisements, Effays, Letters. Full Text: Copyright 1785. The Times'

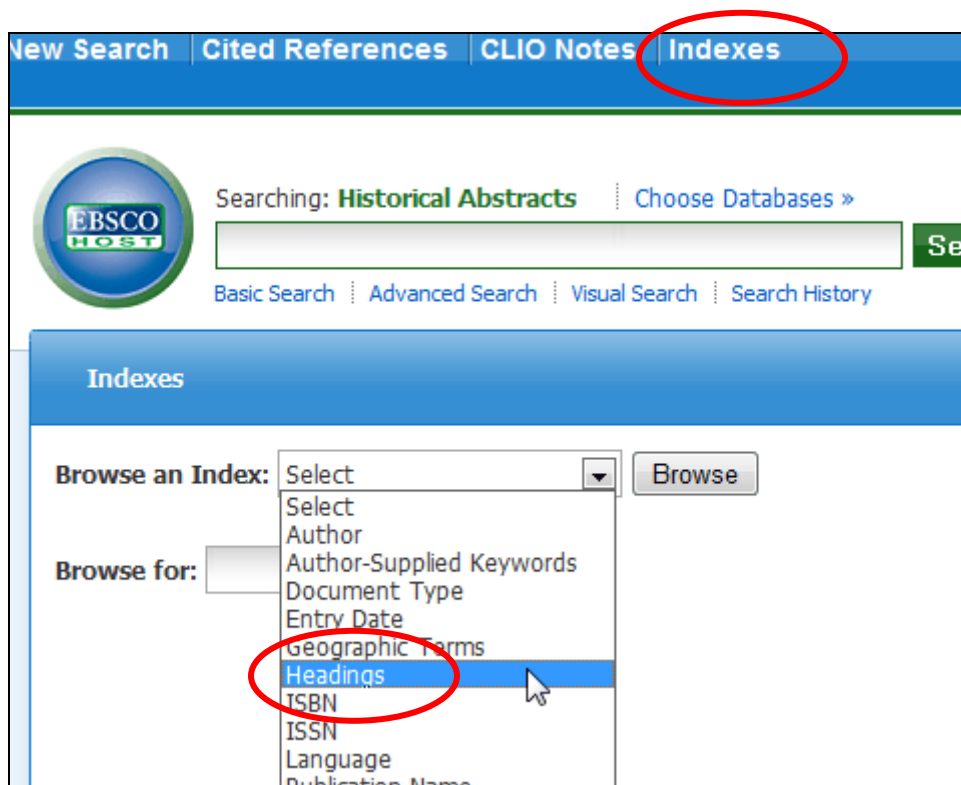
Figure 4: Newspaper Packages

## Finding Secondary Sources:

We have used UNB WorldCat and Article and Research Databases to locate books and articles for a research topic. The databases listed under *Find Books* and *Find Articles* in your Subject Guide are the best starting points for finding secondary sources. The databases, *America: History and Life*, and *Historical Abstracts* are designed to serve the research needs specific to history studies, and have tools built into them that will help you to search efficiently. You used some of these tools in the Citations and Journal Articles workbook. Here are a couple more:

1. **Controlled Vocabularies:** Subject-specific databases, like *Historical Abstracts*, keep track of journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, and other publications in historical studies. Indexers read through the articles and index them, using a controlled vocabulary to

describe the contents of each publication. This controlled vocabulary is specific to the database, and understanding it can help you to find the materials you need. In the database records, the terms *subject*, *descriptor*, or *headings* refer to the words or phrases used in the controlled vocabulary to describe the contents of a publication. In *Historical Abstracts*, you can see the controlled vocabulary under the Indexes tab (fig. 5). Some databases use a *thesaurus* to organize the controlled vocabulary.



**Figure 5: Getting to the controlled vocabulary in *Historical Abstracts***

If you were looking for information on ‘cattle,’ a browse through the Headings index for that term would show alternate terms, along with a count of how many articles have been indexed using that term (fig. 6). If ever you are having trouble finding search terms, take a look at the controlled vocabulary.

Term	Records Count
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle	112
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle -- breeding	4
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle -- breeding -- history	1
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle -- diseases	7
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle -- economic aspects	1
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle -- india	1
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle -- infections	5
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle -- pedigrees	1
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle -- religious aspects	4
<input type="checkbox"/> cattle -- social aspects	1

**Figure 6: Finding headings in *Historical Abstracts***

2. **Field-specific Searching:** Sometimes, you have a good idea of what you want to find when you begin searching in a database. Perhaps you know the author’s name, or the title of the journal in which a particular article appears. You may only be interested in finding something written about a particular geographical area. All of these can be located using field-specific searching. In *Historical Abstracts*, you are provided with a pull-down menu of options for this. Figure 7 shows a search for articles on *agriculture* by someone named *Martinez-Alier*.

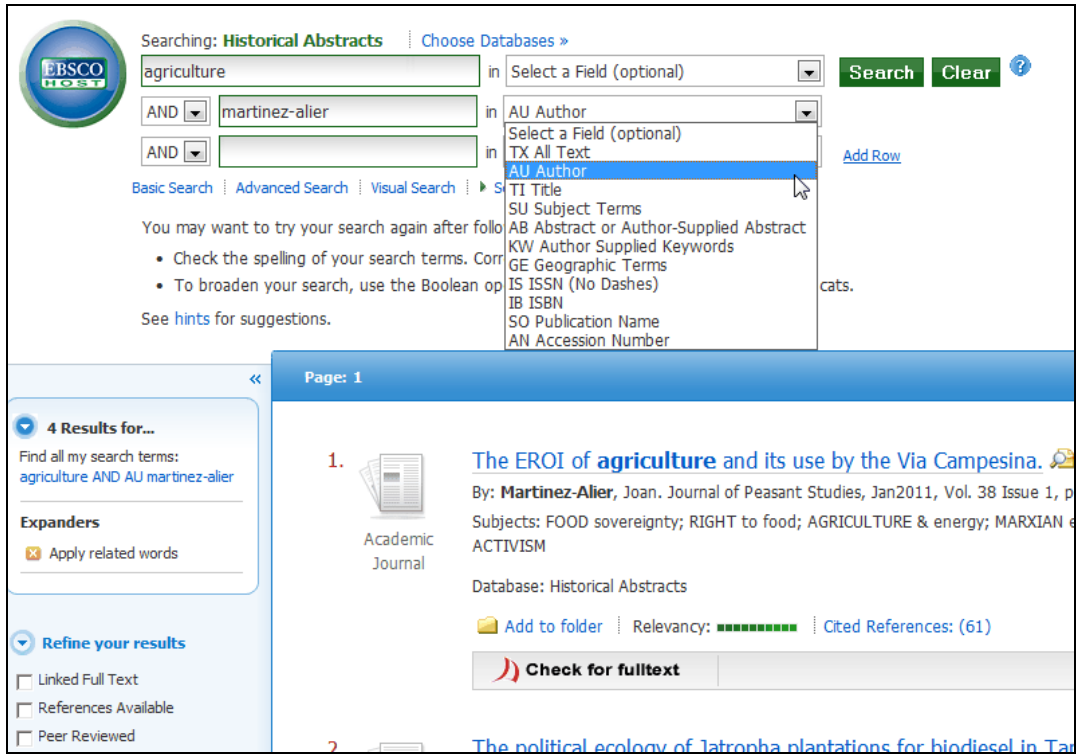


Figure 7: Field-specific searching, topic and author

3. **Linking Search Terms with AND, OR:** In its simplest form, database searching is like drawing up a grocery list: “I need apples AND cheese AND (cake OR cookies).” You will get apples and cheese and then choose either cake or cookies, whichever looks yummiier. The words AND and OR are very powerful in database searching, as they let you combine elements in your searching. Remember that OR is used to broaden your search, by finding related or synonymous terms, while AND is used to narrow your search, by bringing in additional criteria. Most online databases offer options for linking search terms (fig. 8), but you can always simply type in one search string (fig. 9). Use parentheses to combine OR terms.

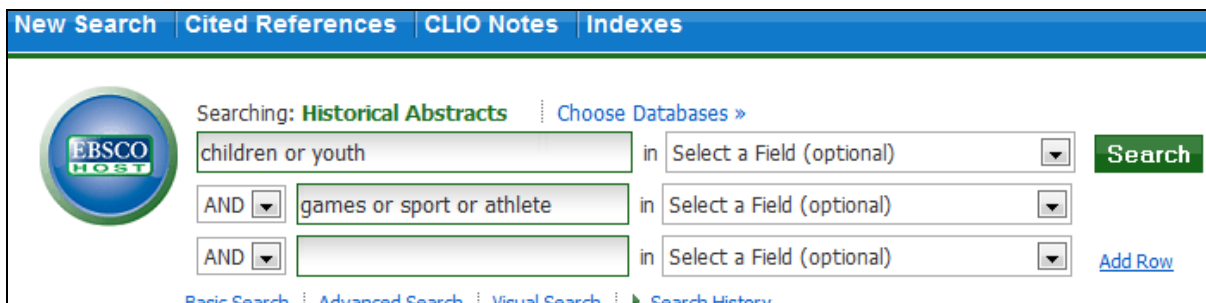


Figure 8

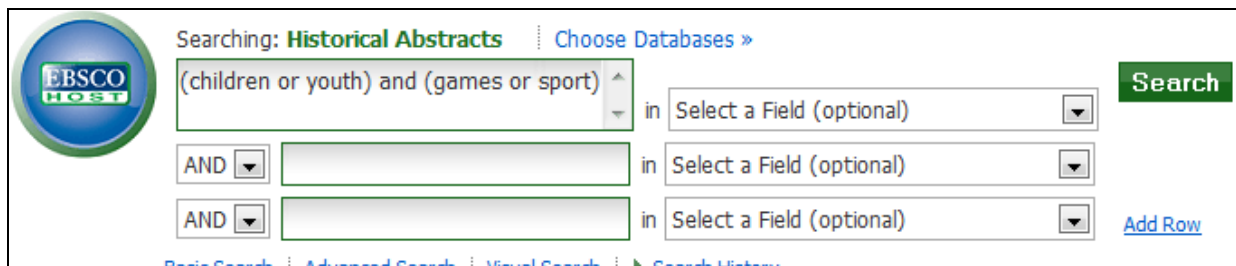


Figure 9

## Finding Tertiary Sources:

Reference, or tertiary sources include encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks of research, almanacs, chronologies, and other publications. They may be in print or online format. This section will help you to find both.

Figure 10: History Subject page, with Top Reference Materials

The Subject Guides for History list the most useful reference sources for you to use, but these are only a portion of the tertiary sources that are available to you. (fig. 10).

You have the option of searching these individually, or you can go into specific subject guides and search using a Reference Universe widget (fig. 11), which will look for your search terms in the indices of hundreds of print and online reference works that UNB Libraries own. Reference Universe is very handy for identifying the most useful reference works for your topic.

# UNB Libraries' Guide to History

Reference Sources [Find Books](#) [Find Articles](#) [Primary Sources](#) [Citing Your Sources](#)

**Note:** In order to optimize functionality, most links will open in a new browser window.

When researching a new topic it is often necessary to get an overview, explanations of unfamiliar terms, or brief factual information. The print and electronic resources listed below include selected reference materials (dictionaries, encyclopaedias, handbooks, guides, and standards) for the field of History. To find additional reference materials, check [Quest](#) (the library catalogue) or our [Reference Materials](#) database. For a quick search on your topic, use the Reference Universe search box, here:

Search for Reference Materials

slavery

Search

Key Resources

Figure 11: Using the Reference Universe widget to find entries on slavery

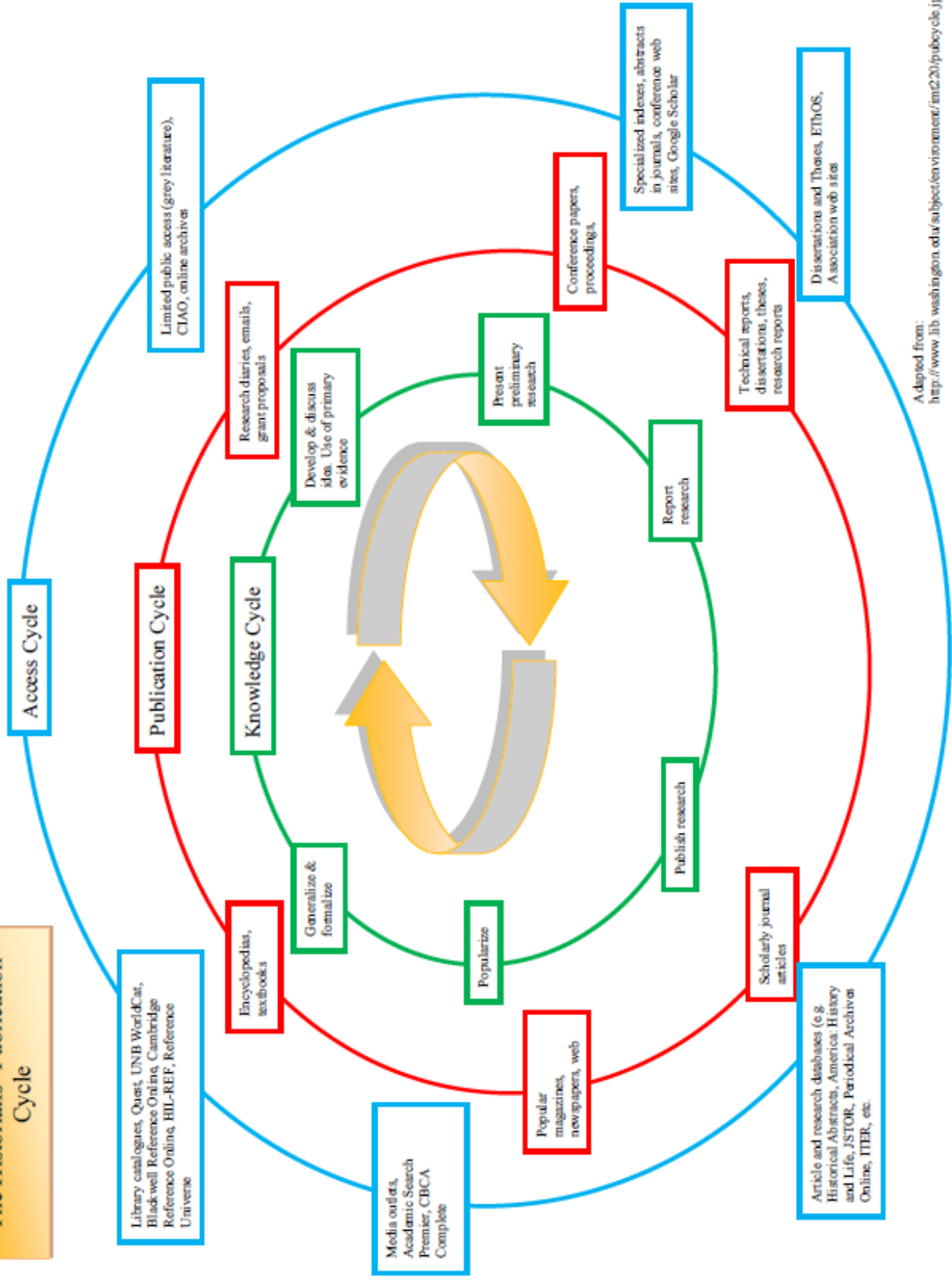
The screenshot shows the Reference Universe search results for the query 'slavery'. The page header includes the Paratext logo and the University of New Brunswick Libraries logo. The search bar shows 'Find slavery' with a dropdown menu set to 'Keyword (all fields)'. The results are displayed in a table with columns for Location, Title, and Description. The results are categorized by location: Online (21) and Print (214). The first result is 'The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery' from ABC-CLIO 1997. The second result is 'Degrees of freedom : Louisiana and Cuba after slavery' from Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2005. The third result is 'Societies after slavery: a select annotated bibliography of printed sources on Cuba, Brazil, British Colonial Africa, South Africa, and the British West Indies' from Pittsburgh 2002.

Location	Title	Description
Online (21)	The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery	View 287 Index Entries   ABC-CLIO 1997 [HT861.H57 1997] [306.3/62/03]   About this Work
Virtual Reference Library (1)	Degrees of freedom : Louisiana and Cuba after slavery	[Additional Metadata Forthcoming] Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2005 [E185.93.L6 S29 2005] [323.1196/07291/09034]   About this Work
Blackwell Reference Online (18)	Societies after slavery: a select annotated bibliography of printed sources on Cuba, Brazil, British Colonial Africa, South Africa, and the British West Indies	Pittsburgh 2002 [Z7464 S6S64 2002 / HT10371 .016 226/81]   About this Work
ABC-CLIO Ebooks (1)		
Oxford Digital Reference Shelf (1)		
Print (214)		

Figure 12: Reference Universe results



# The Historians' Publication Cycle



Adapted from:  
<http://www.lib.washington.edu/subject/environment/im220/pubcycle.jpg>

## Tasks (Due Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> )

Name/Student #: \_\_\_\_\_

### Task #1

Identify the following as either primary, secondary or tertiary sources for research on slavery in Canadian history:

Murray, Alexander L. "The Extradition of Fugitive Slaves from Canada: A Re-Evaluation." *Canadian Historical Review* 43, no. 4 (1962): 298-314. \_\_\_\_\_

Trudel, Marcel. "Le Jeune, Olivier" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, University of Toronto, 2000. [http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id\\_nbr=420](http://www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?&id_nbr=420) \_\_\_\_\_

Report of Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of the Colony of Sierra Leone, 7 May 1827. Box 13, Item 5.3. Wilberforce House Museum, Hull, U.K. \_\_\_\_\_

Mackey, Frank. *Done with Slavery: the Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010). \_\_\_\_\_

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### Task #2

Use UNB WorldCat to find a primary source on the fur trade in North America. What is the title of one of the books you find?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is its location and call number? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Task#3

Use the Reference Universe widget on a History subject guide to find an encyclopedia entry that mentions the use of camels for travel.

What encyclopedia do you find one in?

\_\_\_\_\_

Which volume and page number is the entry found on? \_\_\_\_\_

What is its location and call number? \_\_\_\_\_

Who wrote the entry? \_\_\_\_\_

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### Task #4


If I search through the controlled vocabulary of headings in Historical Abstracts, I am only able to find one article with the heading "pickpockets". I am interested in finding articles about that topic. What other, **allowable** subject headings could I use? Name three headings, and tell me how many articles I might find with each one.


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### Task #5

Which one of the following searches is likely to find me material on how witches were judged or punished?

Circle the correct search.


 Searching: **Historical Abstracts** | [Choose Databases »](#)


witches and witch hunting and witchcraft in SU Subject Terms   

AND  trials and courts and persecution in SU Subject Terms

AND   in Select a Field (optional)  [Add Row](#)

[Basic Search](#) | [Advanced Search](#) | [Visual Search](#) | [Search History](#)


 Searching: **Historical Abstracts** | [Choose Databases »](#)


witches and witch hunting and witchcraft in SU Subject Terms   

OR  trials and courts and persecution in SU Subject Terms

AND   in Select a Field (optional)  [Add Row](#)

[Basic Search](#) | [Advanced Search](#) | [Visual Search](#) | [Search History](#)

 Searching: **Historical Abstracts** | [Choose Databases »](#)

witches or witch hunting or witchcraft in SU Subject Terms   

AND  trials or courts or persecution in SU Subject Terms

AND   in Select a Field (optional)  [Add Row](#)

[Basic Search](#) | [Advanced Search](#) | [Visual Search](#) | [Search History](#)



Searching: **Historical Abstracts** | [Choose Databases »](#)

in



OR

in

AND

in

[Add Row](#)

[Basic Search](#) | [Advanced Search](#) | [Visual Search](#) | [Search History](#)