



LEAVING EVIDENCE OF OUR LIVES

- Goal** Participants will be able to justify their conclusions about whether a source is primary or secondary depending upon the time or topic under study.
- Objectives** Participants will:
- Define primary and secondary sources
 - Recognize that primary sources are created daily and provide insight into personal lives
- Time** 45 minutes
- Preparation** Have ready flip chart and markers.
- Procedure**
1. Ask participants to think about all the activities they were involved in during the past 24 hours.
 2. Working in groups of four or five, have them list as many of these activities as they can remember on chart paper.
 3. For each activity on their list, have them write down what evidence, if any, these activities might have left behind. Examples might include receipts, notes, text messages, security surveillance data, signed credit card documents, voice messages, etc.
 4. Engage participants in a discussion about what constitutes a primary source. Discuss the evidence they have generated as examples of primary sources.
 5. Ask participants to review their lists and what they wrote about the evidence their activities left behind. Lead a group discussion based on these questions:
 - Which of your daily activities were most likely to leave trace evidence behind?
 - What, if any, of that evidence might be preserved for the future? Why?
 - What would a person from the future be able to tell about your life and your society based on evidence of your daily activities that might be preserved for the future?
 6. Lead a full group discussion about a more public event currently happening (a court case, election, public controversy, law being debated), and as a group, have participants answer these probing questions:
 - What kinds of evidence might this event leave behind? Primary sources? Secondary sources?
 - Who records information about this event? How might their perspective impact their recording? Give a possible example.
 - For what purposes are different records of this event made?
 7. Based on what the participants have learned from this activity, ask groups to record their own criteria for primary and secondary sources.
 8. Display the Library's definition of Primary Sources: Primary sources are the raw materials of history — original documents and objects that were created at the time under study. They are different from secondary sources, accounts that retell, analyze, or interpret events, usually at a distance of time or place.

9. Request that a few groups report on how their own criteria compared to the definitions offered by the Library.

**Participant
Discussion**

Discuss importance of primary sources in daily life and have a few participants share how they might use this activity in their classrooms.