The sheer number and variety of historical resources available online today is truly remarkable. You can begin your study of ancient Egypt without leaving your computer by touring the Valley of the Kings, a burial ground for pharaohs of the New Kingdom in ancient Egypt, at the *Theban Mapping Project* [23]. You can then skip across the globe and forward in time several thousand years to watch Gandhi lead the “Salt March” in 1920 to protest the British tax on salt at the website *Harappa* [81]. Perhaps your research topic centers on Islamic ceramics, available through the *Topkapi Museum* website [65], or on cultural contact in the sixteenth century that you explore through European maps of the African continent, found on *Afriterra* [50] (Fig. 1). The Internet has become the most diverse and the largest, repository of historical primary sources in the world. Millions of resources covering almost any subject of historical inquiry are readily available and can be used to examine the complexities of the past across time and space. These sources invite you to examine broad, cross-cultural interactions and

![Historical map from Afriterra: The Cartographic Free Library](https://example.com/map.jpg)
global trends, such as Irish migration (Breaking the Silence [132]) or trade along the Silk Road (International Dunhuang Project [32]), as well as specific people, times, or places, such as ancient Rome (Virtual Catalog of Roman Coins [30]) or Nelson Mandela (ANC Historical Documents Archive [129]). Or you can explore themes, such as travel narratives (Women's Travel Writing, 1830–1930 [98] or South Seas Voyaging and Cross-Cultural Encounters in the Pacific [93]) and twentieth-century propaganda (Chinese Propaganda Posters [135] or “A Summons To Comradeship”: World War I and II Posters [100]).

Not all websites are created equal, however, and the resources available online, especially in the field of world history, are uneven in quality. While they can offer valuable material previously inaccessible to many students, websites related to world history can also be the purveyors of misinformation, poorly translated texts, or biased narratives. World history online is also uneven in terms of regional and chronological coverage. For example, there are more websites devoted to European history than to African history or Latin American history. And while there are some excellent resources covering the period from the beginnings of human society through 1000 C.E. and even more from 1000 C.E. to the eighteenth century, the number of websites that focus on the past 300 years is significantly higher. It is relatively easy to find photographs, artifacts, and maps for studying world history; it is harder to find speeches, films, and oral histories. Many websites address art, popular culture, and religion, while fewer deal with health and disease or the environment.

Numbers alone, however, do not tell the whole story. The key is finding quality materials that relate to the specific theme or topic at hand. The Thinker ImageBase [15] presents more than 85,000 pieces of artwork from around the world, including paintings, photographs, furniture, pottery, and jewelry, dating from the sixth century B.C.E. to the twentieth century C.E. But if you are interested specifically in Buddhism, the Huntington Archive of Buddhist and Related Art [10] would be a better place to start, with thematically grouped images from Southeast and East Asia (Fig. 2). The Index of Medieval Medical Images [42] addresses a relatively narrow topic, but for a project on healing in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it offers more than 500 high-quality images. Vistas [66] presents an even smaller number, roughly one hundred images. Each image, however, is accompanied by a discussion of its use, origin, and significance, along with thematic units that contextualize the images, provide background on “patterns of the every day,” and discuss ways of making sense of pre-Columbian images. Depending on the course and the project, a smaller website like this one may prove most helpful.

Academics who study world history have been expanding their work from the study of societies in isolation to a focus on interactions and exchanges between cultures, a trend that has started to reshape the way world history is taught. Cross-cultural interactions are often at the heart of historical issues, and there are frequently multiple, conflicting accounts of any event or trend. Some of the websites listed in this book address cultural contact directly. Still others can be examined for evidence of cross-cultural contact even when it is not the
website’s explicit focus, allowing you to study the links between cultures, such as the dissemination of ideas from one society to another.

For example, *Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record* [52] intentionally presents cultures in contact, voluntarily and by force. This collection of 1,000 images of events, people, slave forts, and artifacts, such as ritual objects and punishment devices, encourages visitors to see slavery as an Atlantic system rather than a phenomenon limited to one region. In contrast, investigating cultural contact through *Japanese Old Photographs in Bakumatsu-Meiji Period* [84] requires a more conscious effort. The website displays 5,000 hand-tinted photographs dating from the second half of the nineteenth century. Taken primarily by Western diplomats, missionaries, and merchants, these images portray Japanese people and society during a period of rapid transformation, modernization, and confrontation with Western imperialism. The photographs also reveal Western perspectives, focusing on an exotic Japan, full of shrines, pagodas, and geisha. To explore clothing, architecture, or the emerging technology of photography, these images could be examined alongside other photographs from the late nineteenth century, such as those taken by American photographer William Henry Jackson during his tour of North Africa, Asia, Australia, and Oceania in the 1890s [71], or those found in the *Abdul-Hamid II Collection Photography Archive* [67] of late-nineteenth-century photographs from the Ottoman Empire.
An Introduction to World History Research Online

To help you find the best websites for your project, *World History Matters* provides a roadmap for locating reliable sources quickly as well as a series of important questions to ask when you find them. Whatever your assignment or interests, you are sure to find valuable resources awaiting further exploration. The Internet can help you track down answers to historical questions or explore fascinating primary sources to challenge traditional explanations in world history. Use it wisely and it can be a valuable tool for learning about the past.

**Evaluating Websites**

One of the greatest strengths of the Internet is its egalitarianism — anyone can post anything online. When it comes to historical research, this egalitarianism is both a strength and a weakness. On the positive side, it means that a rich, diverse pool of historical primary sources is available to anyone who is interested in them. On the negative side, far too many websites containing primary sources are of questionable quality. There are several essential questions to ask when assessing a website’s reliability — questions you need to answer before you start to use the primary sources found within.

**Who Created the Website?**

The first thing you need to know about any website you plan to use is who is responsible for its content. Who selected the sources presented there? How are they presented? Who is providing the financial support for the project? Sometimes the authorship of a website is easily determined. As you can see in this screenshot, *The Word on the Street* [99], a collection of broadsides from Scotland, was created by the National Library of Scotland (Fig. 3). At the bottom of the page are links to the National Library of Scotland, National Library of Scotland Digital Library, and credits. Similarly, *Famous Trials* [8] clearly states at the top of the home page that the site was created “by Douglas O. Linder (2007) University of Missouri–Kansas City (UMKC) School of Law” (Fig. 4). It also provides a link to Linder’s other web creations and biographical information. Knowing that the website is the work of a professor whose professional work is directly related to the content of the website will help you to judge both the quality of the sources and the quality of any interpretations presented.

In contrast, incomplete or non-existent credit information is a clue that a website may not be reliable. For instance, if you type “Adolf Hitler” into a popular

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**Fig. 3** Screenshot from *The Word on the Street* [99]. (The Word on the Street. Used with permission by The Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.)
search engine, one of the top results is the Hitler Historical Museum, http://www.hitler.org. This website contains a number of interesting primary sources from Adolf Hitler's life and career, but it is impossible to determine who put them there. A careful reading of the contents reveals that the author(s) believe that Hitler has been unfairly criticized by historians. For example, a link to “Adolf Hitler Books” is accompanied by the comment: “Translation of Third Reich Originals without snide commentary.” As a general rule, controversial topics require extra investigation and a very careful reading of the contextual material on the website. Be especially skeptical if (a) a topic is very controversial; (b) you cannot determine who the author is; and (c) you find obvious biases.

Most websites offer an “About” page with information describing the website and its creator(s) or, at a minimum, a contact email address. Even a lone email address may provide a clue to the authorship of the website. Is it based at a university (e.g., someone@gmu.edu) or a government agency (e.g., someone@loc.gov)? Or does it come from a commercial email provider such as Hotmail?

Another way to puzzle out who is responsible for a website is to shorten the URL. Try deleting the text after the last forward slash (/) and pressing Enter on your keyboard. For example, if you were looking at The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy [4], http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm, you would delete avalon.htm which takes you back to the Avalon home page. When you delete the last two sections of the URL, avalon/avalon.htm, you are directed to the Yale University Law School. Deleting further takes you to Yale University’s home page, www.yale.edu. Yale University and its School of Law are well-respected institutions that lend credibility to The Avalon Project and the material it provides.

In other cases, shortening the URL may not help. Not every URL that ends in .edu is officially sanctioned by an educational institution. Students and faculty often have access to URLs that are on their institution’s server. So http://www.ucla.edu/~jones might be the URL for someone named Jones who is affiliated with the University of California at Los Angeles, but it is not necessarily run as an official university website. In addition, many websites are now built on databases with long and complex URLs that may lead to a central webserver at a
large organization, such as a government agency. Or they may only lead to hosting services that offer no hints to the background of the website creator.

Once upon a time in the history of the Internet it was possible to make some judgments about a website based upon its domain name. URLs issued in the United States that ended in .com signified commercial purposes, those ending in .org were intended for non-commercial purposes, and those ending in .net were intended for network providers. Today, however, any organization or individual can purchase a .com, .net, .org, .biz, .tv, or .us domain name, so these suffixes do not necessarily indicate who is responsible for a website. And outside the United States, domain names end with a two letter code signifying the country where the website is based — or at least where the domain name was sold. Thus, an address ending in .uk is based in the United Kingdom and one ending in .ch is based in Switzerland. The exceptions to this free market in domain names are those based in the United States that are reserved for specific uses: .edu for educational institutions in the U.S., .mil for the U.S. military, and .gov for the U.S. government. So, for instance, websites based at American colleges, universities, and schools all end in .edu and those at government institutions, such as the Department of State or National Archives, end in .gov.

**Where Did the Sources on the Website Come From?**

The next important question to ask when you want to use web-based sources responsibly is about the origin of the materials provided. The website *Excerpts from Slave Narratives* [77], created by Steven Mintz at the University of Houston, offers 46 first-person accounts of slavery and African life dating from 1682 to 1937. A source citation for each account is listed at the end of the text. For example, the narrative of Venture Smith includes the following note: “A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, A Native of Africa (New London, Conn., 1798; expanded ed., Hamden, Conn., 1896).” The original source citations are particularly important in this case because the website offers excerpts. The citation allows you to track down the full source and read the entire narrative. By contrast, the *Hitler Historical Museum* mentioned earlier offers no source information for the speeches and photographs provided, making verification impossible.

**Have the Sources Been Altered in Any Way?**

The slave narrative example leads to a follow-up question: Is the website presenting the source in its entirety or just a portion of the source? Has the source been edited or otherwise changed? That question is relevant whether the source is a text, object, image, or video clip. In the case of text, website creators such as Mintz often, but not always, inform you that the text you are reading is an excerpt. In other cases, the text will contain ellipses (…) to indicate that portions of the complete text have been cut.

When looking at an image, though, it is harder to determine if something is an original or has been cropped or changed. Image editing tools make alterations simple and edited photographs can look authentic. First, check to see if
the creators discuss this issue anywhere on the website. Second, ask yourself if anything about the image might suggest that it has been altered. Do the colors seem unnatural? Have you seen other versions of this image that included features or people not in the current one? Similar questions hold true for video and audio sources, especially with the increasing popularity of online media. Does an audio or video clip seem edited or complete? Are there unnatural moments or cuts that might indicate editing or deletions? If anything in the source gives you pause, look for a more complete version.

Compare these two photographs carefully. Do you notice any differences? The man with the glasses who is touching his hat is missing from the second image (Fig. 5b). The first image (Fig. 5a) was taken shortly after the Russian Revolution. In the center of the photograph, it shows two of the key leaders: V. I. Lenin (left) and Leon Trotsky (right). After Lenin’s death on January 21, 1924, a power struggle ensued to determine who would assume leadership of the Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.). Joseph Stalin emerged as the winner of this struggle and by 1929 had solidified his place as Lenin’s successor. He then had Trotsky expelled from the
U.S.S.R. and later assassinated, and erased his name and image from the written and visual records of the revolution. To achieve this, the photograph’s negative was retouched to remove Trotsky. Finding an alternate version allows you to compare and to see how the original was altered.¹

**How Current is the Website?**

Another important question is currency — currency of the website and currency of the materials presented on the website. Was the website created in 1999, but recently updated? Or was it created in 2004 with no revisions? Older websites that are not maintained generally have problems such as broken links. Currency may also matter because recent research can shed new light on historical questions or translations. Copyright permission to use recent English translations can be very expensive, so in the interest of presenting a wide body of materials, some websites, such as *Perseus Digital Library* [27] and the *Internet History Sourcebooks Project* [11] generally present translations created before 1923. These are valuable materials, but new research and more recent translations are often available in books and should be consulted for in-depth projects. On the other hand, an unchanging website might present the most recent sources available on your topic.

Assessing the significance of this issue requires knowledge about the state of research on your topic — information that can be found in secondary sources, especially in books in your library. Take, for example, a website devoted to the history of China. If the website was created in 1998 and has not been updated since, it would not reflect China’s rapid economic growth in the past decade. If your topic is ancient China, the lack of updates might not affect your research. If you are interested in manufacturing trends over the past hundred years, however, recent updates would be very important. Information about the date of creation and date of revision for a website is often provided at the bottom of the homepage or on the “About” page.

**Does the Website Present a Particular Perspective, Bias, or Agenda?**

A common way to locate online resources is via search engines that lead you to a specific page within a website, bypassing the homepage. Before using a resource from an internal page, though, visit the homepage. It will help you answer the final questions you need to ask before using a website for research. The first is whether the resources available on the website are appropriate to the subject of the website. If the website is devoted to the history of European imperialism in sub-Saharan Africa, then one would expect to find sources from both the European and African sides of the story. It is rarely the case that websites are this comprehensive, though. More commonly, they tell one side of the story or

the other, as in Formosa: Nineteenth Century Images [78]. This website provides excellent resources from the perspective of European and American travelers to Taiwan, but you need to look elsewhere to find Taiwanese or Chinese views. A homepage should provide a clear sense of the scope of materials available on that particular website and the goals of the creator(s).

One last question is whether the creators of the website have a particular ideological, religious, or analytical agenda and how that agenda might shape the selection of resources. The Noble Qur’an [34], for example, is sponsored by the Muslim Student Association, a national organization founded by the Wahhabi Sunni sect (the official sect of Saudi Arabia). The organization has a specific goal: to provide religious guidance to Muslim students on U.S. university campuses. Yet it also provides excellent primary sources for those studying Islam — three full, scholarly translations of the Qur’an (or Koran) along with transliterations, introductions to each chapter, and background essays. Understanding a website’s agenda helps you assess the resources and use them in an informed way.

Web 2.0

Now that we have covered the main questions to ask as you locate historical resources online, we want to discuss two recent developments in digital history related to Web 2.0. Web 2.0 refers to a new generation of web applications, such as wikis and social networking websites, that allow for and encourage collaboration and active participation among users. Web 2.0 developments impact history classrooms and historical research in many ways, and as with the Internet in general, are most valuable when we understand and assess their strengths and weaknesses.

The first development is the advent of websites based on wiki technologies. Wikis (the word comes from the Polynesian phrase wiki-wiki or quick-quick) are software platforms that allow anyone to add or edit content on the website at any time. The most heavily trafficked website with historical information is Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org, providing background information on close to two million English-language topics (Fig. 6). It is commonly used for research on historical background by students, either with or without approval from their teachers. But it is important to remember that each entry in Wikipedia is the collective work of multiple authors. You can see the screen name or IP address of the various authors and editors for a given entry by looking at the history tab, a list of all versions of the entry and the changes made (Fig. 7). You may or may not be able to verify the identity or credentials of a given author with this information, however, often making it difficult to validate the authority of the entry.

Fig. 6 Screenshot from Wikipedia, “World History” entry. (World History screenshot, Wikipedia, August 28, 2007. www.wikipedia.org.)
So how do you know if an author is sharing knowledge, repeating rumors, or posting incorrect information?

Critics reject *Wikipedia* outright as inaccurate because its entries, unlike those in traditional encyclopedias, are the work of both non-experts and experts on a given subject. Supporters argue that *Wikipedia* produces a collective wisdom that is, for the most part, accurate, and that having multiple authors increases the likelihood that someone will catch errors. Both sides raise valid points. Comparisons of entries in *Wikipedia* to those in more traditional encyclopedias like the *Encyclopedia Britannica* do turn up errors, but the errors appear in both the traditional print encyclopedias and *Wikipedia*. *Wikipedia* entries on popular topics — such as Charles Darwin or the Taj Mahal, for instance — are often just as accurate as those in conventional encyclopedias.

To use *Wikipedia* wisely, there are two things to keep in mind. The first is that *Wikipedia* is a collectively authored encyclopedia. *Wikipedia* does not value original research; indeed, it prohibits it. Encyclopedias are useful for looking up facts, but they contain little or no interpretation of those facts. The second, given the ever-changing nature of *Wikipedia*, is that when you visit an entry matters. Five minutes after your visit, the information may be substantially altered and may even earn the *Wikipedia* warning, “The neutrality and factual accuracy of this article are disputed” as posted on the entry for the Indian Independence Movement on August 28, 2007 (Fig. 8). To cite a *Wikipedia* entry, include the date and time, available on the “History” tab, to identify which version you used.

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A second Web 2.0 development is changing the way we do historical research online. Social networking databases such as the photo-sharing website Flickr.com or the video-sharing website YouTube.com include new historical content every day. Users of these websites with an interest in the past post historical images and films, such as World War II newsreels, from multiple countries. One significant downside to using this kind of historical material is that it rarely includes any source information, making it difficult or impossible to locate originals or verify origin. On the other hand, these websites often contain material not commonly available. For instance, if you wanted to compare political graffiti across societies or over time, Flickr.com might be an excellent resource. Users around the world have made available tens of thousands of photographs of graffiti that otherwise would be inaccessible without extensive travel, and are unlikely to be included in a traditional online archive (Fig. 9).

Most Web 2.0 sites allow users to interact with content and with each other by editing material directly (as in the case of Wikipedia) or by commenting on what they see, read, or watch. The commentary is unlikely to relate to your research, but on occasion, comments can help you make sense of an image or film clip or provide a personal experience connected with it. You may also find visitors to the website who share your interest or who might have expertise that would help you answer a question. As with the sources themselves, though, proceed with caution and verify authenticity.

History students are taking part in these Web 2.0 developments every day and in the process are participating in the creation of historical content in new ways. Some instructors, for example, require their students to create and edit entries in Wikipedia, both because it teaches students about the pros and cons of this online encyclopedia and because it teaches them about the creation of historical information in a public forum. Other students create and edit Wikipedia entries on their own because they have an interest in the subject matter. In this way they are taking part in the creation of our common fund of historical knowledge.

Fig. 9 Vivitar graffiti from Flickr.com. (Vivitar Graffiti, Permission granted by photographer, David Ross.)
Even more common is the posting of photographs and video files on Flickr.com or YouTube.com. Although the vast majority of the material posted to these websites by history students has nothing to do with history, a growing fraction is historical in nature — photographs of memorial sites such as monuments or battlegrounds, or video files that include material from earlier decades, such as clips from news broadcasts of significant events such as the Tiananmen Square protest and massacre in 1989.

**Working with Online Primary and Secondary Sources**

What is a primary source? What is a secondary source? Knowing the difference between the two categories of materials about the past is important. While both are valuable and useful, they provide different kinds of information and therefore are used in different ways.

Primary sources are materials directly related to the past by time or participation — things created in the past by people living at the time. Historians build their analyses of people, places, and events from these pieces of the past. The category “primary source” includes photographs, prints, paintings, government documents, advertisements, religious emblems, musical recordings, speeches by politicians, films, letters (by ordinary as well as by famous people), newspaper articles, sermons, and material culture such as pottery, furniture, or tools. Primary sources provide the opportunity to engage directly with the past, to try to sort out what happened and why. Working with historical primary sources, however, is not easy. Evidence from the past represents individual experiences as well as social exchanges, and its meaning is rarely obvious at first glance.

Secondary sources are interpretations, syntheses, or descriptions of the past created by a historian or writer who has studied a range of primary sources and read other secondary sources. For example, a page from the manuscript Nueva corónica y buen gobierno or New Chronicle and Good Government written by native Andean Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala in 1615 [58] is a primary source. An article by a historian analyzing the manuscript to discuss Andean history or the effects of Spanish colonization on indigenous people is a secondary source. As with websites, secondary sources reflect the author’s point of view, shaping what primary sources will be included and how they will be interpreted.

In most cases, the distinction between primary and secondary sources is clear. In some situations, though, the lines are blurred. A textbook is generally considered a secondary source. In the twenty-first century, however, we might use a textbook from 1960 as a primary source to research what students learned about the Cold War or to what degree history textbooks discussed women’s roles in historic events a half century ago.

Oral history presents another complicated case. Oral histories are usually collected years and even decades after the events being discussed, so they are both a history of the past and a record of how that past has been remembered. The Uysal-Walker Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative [149], for example, presents Turkish folktales that reflect oral traditions created during and after the Otto-
Working with Online Primary and Secondary Sources

Primary Sources and Secondary Sources

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Sources</th>
<th>Secondary Sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A photograph of armed men and women during the Mexican Revolution</td>
<td>Analysis of the photograph or the photographer in a history journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A travel journal</td>
<td>A book written by a leading historian in the twenty-first century about nineteenth-century travel writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An official document such as the Peace Treaty of Versailles</td>
<td>A recording of a college lecture about the end of World War I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 1931 advertisement for Electrolux vacuum cleaners from Free Lance magazine</td>
<td>A website on the rise of advertising in the twentieth century or on the changing roles of women and nature of work in the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A musical recording of a New Mexican wedding song</td>
<td>A Library of Congress website about music sung by Spanish-speaking residents in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Portuguese map of America drawn in 1580</td>
<td>A modern map showing sixteenth-century Portuguese colonies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fifteenth-century tax survey record for a 56-year-old woman named Alessandra Buondelmon</td>
<td>A study of the 10,000 tax records collected in 1427 that analyzes individual, family, and economic trends in Florence, Italy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A children’s toy from Ancient Mesopotamia</td>
<td>A textbook discussion of daily life in the Middle East in the Ancient World.</td>
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Man Empire. These were collected over a period of forty years in the late twentieth century. They are primary sources, but must be analyzed while keeping the process of collection, elapsed time, and role of memory in mind.

When working with primary and secondary sources, it is important to understand that history is not a simple, fixed narrative. Historians debate, discuss, and even disagree about the meaning of various sources and interpretations of the past. Many factors shape historical events and historians also look at how things might have happened given different circumstances or when seen through another pair of eyes. For example, our understanding of history changes when we look at the experiences of political leaders versus the daily lives of those who were not known nationally or internationally. Looking at multiple perspectives can provide a more complex understanding of the past. In addition, learning to understand the past, to connect it to a larger story, is key. Equally important is
the skill of investigating the past carefully and with an open mind, allowing yourself to see things that may not fit with the larger narrative you have learned.

There are dozens, hundreds, or even millions of primary sources available on almost any subject in world history. Think about what kinds of sources are most relevant to your project and then start with background research. Are there just a few resources available? Can you review them all? What if there are hundreds or thousands of sources on your topic, such as the more than 2,000 documents in the Marxists Internet Archive [115]. To begin, you could select a sample of the total or focus on one time period or a single author. The website PictureAustralia [119] presents a vast collection of 600,000 images documenting Australia’s cultural history — far too many to use in a single research project. However, a search on “child” returns forty-one images — a much more manageable number that would allow you to begin to explore childhood, indigenous people, and colonization.

Here are several important steps historians take when analyzing a primary source.

**Sourcing:** Who created the source and what do we know about that person or group of people? When and where did it appear? What happened to it after its first appearance? What can we learn about an author’s motives, intentions, or point of view? Is the creator in a position to be a good reporter? Why or why not? How did the source survive? Why is it available in the twenty-first century?

**Close Reading:** Start by carefully reading or analyzing the source. For a written document, consider the kind of source, tone, and word choice. Pay attention to parts of speech — what kinds of nouns or adjectives are used? Does this remain consistent throughout the document or does it change? How formal or informal is the language? Is the account believable? Is it internally consistent or are there contradictions? For an image, look carefully at each section separately and then look at the whole. Listen to a song or watch a video multiple times. What does the source say or look like or sound like? What might it mean? What does each section mean? How do the sections work together? What questions come up as you carefully analyze the source itself?

**Contextualization:** Consider the larger historical picture and situate the source within a framework of events and perspectives, paying close attention to when they happened and where they took place. When was the source created? What else was happening at this time that may have influenced the creator? Where was this source created? How might location have influenced its creation? How might an intended or unintended audience have shaped the source?

**Corroboration:** Whenever possible, check important details against each other. Evaluate multiple sources in relationship to one another, and look for similarities as well as contradictions. Look at key content and stylistic differences. Where do the sources agree with one another? Where do they disagree? What viewpoint does each source reflect? Which sources seem more reliable or trustworthy? Why?
The *World History Matters* website, [http://worldhistorymatters.org](http://worldhistorymatters.org), offers some additional resources for learning to analyze different kinds of primary sources. Eight guides offer strategies for analyzing particular types of primary sources (music, images, objects, maps, newspapers, travel narratives, official documents, and personal accounts) as part of world history. Historian Jerry Bentley, for example, discusses a set of questions to ask when working with travel narratives, such as: “Who is the author of the travel account?” “What kinds of interests motivated the traveler and the author of the travel account?” and “What influence has the travel account had during its own and later times?” In addition, in sixteen multimedia case studies, scholars model strategies for interpreting primary sources and placing them in historical context. Historian Joan Bristol analyzes a record from the Mexican Inquisition and unravels the story of Gertrudis de Escobar, a 14-year-old *mulata* servant who was accused of renouncing God. Bristol discusses the use of Inquisition records in investigating youth, race, and religion in seventeenth-century New Spain.3

Many websites also contain secondary source content. This may include explanatory or contextualizing text that introduces the topic, explains a particular source, or leads to a bibliography of related scholarly articles and books. These secondary source materials provide both a context for understanding the sources and an entry point into the conversation that historians are having about a particular topic. *Vindolanda Tablets Online* [29] for example, presents close to 1,000 wooden writing tablets found at the Roman auxiliary fortress at Vindolanda behind Hadrian’s Wall in Britain. These tablets from the late first and early second centuries C.E., discarded by departing troops, record official and personal accounts of life in one community of the Roman world. The “exhibition,” a valuable secondary source, introduces this rather unique find, discussing Vindolanda and its setting, the history of Roman forts, the lives of soldiers, the community at large, background on the documents and process of translation, and strategies for reading the texts. This information provides a framework and strategies for beginning to understand a source that was created a long time ago, in a language no longer spoken. When you begin to analyze the primary sources yourself, you can take part in that conversation.

### Search Tips and Further Resources

#### Using Search Engines Effectively

Browsing is very helpful when you are starting a project and do not have a specific resource or topic in mind. A well-designed website allows you to wander around large thematic or chronological sections, to see connections and groupings. When you do know what you want, however, a keyword search is

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sometimes the best path. Google, the most commonly used search engine, can be a powerful tool, especially once you understand how it works and how to use it wisely.

The first wave of search engines, such as AltaVista, HotBot, and Excite, were not very successful at discriminating between high-quality and low-quality websites. A poorly written website that mentioned the Holocaust fifty times might be mechanically ranked more “relevant” than an authoritative website from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum [124] that mentioned the word only a dozen times on its home page. In the late 1990s, Google revolutionized the way search engines work, presenting a smarter search engine.

Google, for example, looks at the presence of keywords in the title and URL rather than searching meta tags, the hidden tags written by a website author to describe the contents of a webpage. The more significant development, however, built upon a unique element of the web itself — the ability to link to other websites. Google founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin found a way to use the popularity of certain websites to promote their rankings. A website on the Holocaust with twenty links to it from other websites was probably better than a site with one or two links to it. If in turn some of those other websites were “authoritative” (i.e., they also had lots of links to them), so much the better for the first website’s ranking. In short, Google found a way to measure reputation on the web through a recursive analysis of the interconnectedness of the medium itself.4

Here are some additional tips for finding what you are looking for.

**Use Quotation Marks** Using quotation marks makes your search more specific by identifying multiple search terms as a specific phrase. If you enter the words world history without quotes, Google returns more than 800 million results. If you put the search term in quotes (“world history”) you have just narrowed it down to two and a half million. Entering the specific topic, time period, or region you are interested in exploring, such as “world history” “Latin America,” will narrow it still further.

**Use Advanced Search** The easiest way to expedite your search and quickly move from millions of returns to hundreds or even dozens, is to use the Advanced Search feature. You can click on “Advanced Search” from the main search page or go directly to [http://www.google.com/advanced_search](http://www.google.com/advanced_search). This allows you to narrow your search to specific languages, include or exclude words or phrases, restrict domain names, or define the location of occurrences (e.g., the phrase occurs anywhere on the page, only in the title, or only in the text of a webpage).

**Enter Multiple Terms** If you are interested in the role played by American troops in the Boxer Rebellion, you’ll want to enter “boxer rebellion American troops,” since anything else might take you to a website on Mohammed Ali. The

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first website returned by the Google search engine in this search is the Wikipedia page on the Boxer Rebellion. The second website is from the National Archives and offers an article (secondary source) on the involvement of American troops in the Rebellion. The third choice is from the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and includes the transcript of an interview with noted American diplomatic historian Walter LaFeber. The fourth is from About.com which simply republishes the content from Wikipedia. It is not until you get to the ninth choice in the Google search that you finally have access to primary sources, in this case drawn from the collections of the U.S. Navy.

Tell Google Where to Find It If you know that you saw a sixteenth-century map of Casablanca on the website Historic Cities: Maps and Documents [60] but you do not remember how you found it, you can type your keyword and the URL “casablanca site:historic-cities.huji.ac.il” into a Google search and the map will be your first hit. If you remember that the title of a website you visited included the words “digital,” “Islamic,” and “project” you can type “intitle:digital islam project” to quickly find the Ahlul-Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project [31].

Other such operators include intext:, allintext:, allintitle:, inurl:, author:, and location:.

Use the +, –, |, and ~ Signs It is also possible to limit the results of a Google search by using special characters. If you are interested in listening directly to the words of Agatha Christie or Salmon Rushdie, you might search for “Agatha Christie” + “audio” or “Salmon Rushdie” + “audio” to quickly find their interviews on BBC Audio Interviews [131]. The minus sign (–) means not and the solid vertical line (|) substitutes for or. So if you are searching for information on the John Scopes trial, you might try “John Scopes | monkey + trial” because the trial was also called the “Monkey” trial. Or, if you wanted search results that excluded Wikipedia, you would use “John Scopes | monkey – wikipedia” to access more carefully selected search results. If you are not sure about different names for the same thing, try using the synonym search. Using the (~) symbol in your search returns the term you are looking for and any synonyms of that term.

Translate a Text Although a rough translator at best, Google can give you the “gist” of an article or website in a number of languages, including Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Portuguese, or Spanish. See http://www.google.com/language_tools for this feature. Beware, however, that free, online translations are often imperfect.

Link Check An additional tool for assessing the reliability of a website is investigating which other websites and organizations find it valuable. Run a “link check” on Google by typing “link” and the complete URL into the Google search field as follows:

link:http://www.giftsofspeech.org

The link check on Gifts of Speech: Women’s Speeches from Around the World [140], created by Sweet Briar College, yields 165 items. This means that more than
150 websites link directly to this archive. Even more promising, many of these links come from library, teaching, and university websites, indicating that an academic audience has favorably reviewed this website.

Other Searches Did you know that you can find a current map by typing an address into Google or using Google Maps, http://maps.google.com? You can also find out what a word means by asking Google. For example, you can find out the two possible meanings of *portmanteau* by entering “define:portmanteau.” You can convert measurements or make a calculation with Google. Type “9000/4” and Google will return the answer “2250.” Type “35 degrees Celsius in Fahrenheit” and you will receive “95 degrees Fahrenheit.”

Other Search Engines When searching for information on current events, you may want to search directly on media websites such as the New York Times, http://www.nytimes.com, or the British Broadcasting System, http://www.bbc.co.uk. Both offer broad coverage of current events, although access to archived articles is not free. You can also try other search engines such as Metacrawler, http://www.metacrawler.com, and Vivísimo, http://www.vivisimo.com. Keep a library of “favorites” or “bookmarks” with search engines or websites that you use frequently for research.

A Word About Plagiarism

Printed materials have long provided ready content for plagiarism, but the Internet, and the mixture of skill and naïveté with which many approach it, creates new opportunities and new dangers. Online texts, images, sounds, and videos are easy to copy, paste, and manipulate. While this may make note taking easier, it also makes plagiarism — intentional or unintentional — as easy as clicking on “copy” and “paste.” Many students are not aware of the full meaning of plagiarism and its repercussions. School and college policies vary, but students who are caught plagiarizing can encounter a range of consequences, from failing a course to expulsion. Plagiarism does not have to be deliberate to be wrong — unintentional plagiarism is generally subject to the same penalties.

Plagiarism is presenting the words, work, or opinions of someone else as one’s own without proper acknowledgment. This includes borrowing the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought from someone else without proper acknowledgment. If a history paper gives the impression that the writer of the paper is the author of the words, ideas, or conclusions when they are the product of another person’s work, the writer of that paper is guilty of plagiarism. This is equally true for published and unpublished materials (such as a paper written by another student) as well as for any material found on the Internet.

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Studying other people’s ideas through primary and secondary sources is central to conducting historical research. Historians use quotations from primary sources to illustrate their arguments and include quotations from other scholars to place their discussion in a larger context. Both of these uses are acceptable, and indeed desirable, aspects of writing a history paper. The key is to always credit the source of direct quotations, paraphrased information, or ideas and to use your skills to create your own original ideas and historical analysis.

There are new tools to help you in this process. Zotero, http://www.zotero.org, a free extension for the popular open-source web browser Firefox, allows you to build, organize, and annotate your own collections while conducting research online (Fig. 10). With the click of a mouse, it collects and saves all available reference information about a website, book, article, or other primary source from major research websites and databases, such as JSTOR, ProQuest, and Google Books, as well as most library catalogs. Once saved into Zotero, you can add notes, drag and drop texts and images into multiple collections (folders), search your collections, export citations, and create “reports” or documents summarizing your research. You can also highlight and add notes to stored documents from the Web. Tools such as Zotero help you organize your research and reduce the risk of ending up with unidentified sources or notes, a key factor in avoiding plagiarism.

Here are some steps that you can take to avoid plagiarism.

1) Start by taking notes carefully, especially when moving from a website to a word processing document or when typing notes from a book. If you copy and paste, always put the entire text in quotes and include the full citation. If you paraphrase, make sure that you understand the original text and then put it aside. Write the idea in your own words and be sure to cite the author as the source of the idea, even when it is not a direct quote.

2) When you quote directly from a source to a computer document (including all citation information), change the color of the quote with your word processor to make it stand out from the rest of the text. This will serve as a visual reminder that something is a quote and requires proper citation.

3) Update your list of sources, primary and secondary, as you take notes. Use the guidelines for citing electronic resources listed below.

4) Keep a copy of each source you use, including photocopies of print articles and key passages from books. Print copies of online sources or email them to yourself and store them together in one folder.

5) Save drafts of your work as you research and write papers. When you begin to make revisions, create a new copy and save the original. This creates a record of your work and the development of your thoughts.

6) Finally, learn more about plagiarism, paraphrasing, and college regulations by visiting a writing center or library. Visit the websites listed below for additional definitions, suggestions, and resources.

Additional Online Resources on Research, Plagiarism, and Documenting Sources:

- Research and Documentation Online, Diana Hacker
  http://dianahacker.com/resdoc

- Writer’s Handbook, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Writing Center
  http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook

- Documenting Sources, George Mason University Writing Center
  http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/plagiarism.html

Citing Online Sources

Citing sources is key to conducting historical research. It also provides an important record of your research process. Keeping a “running” bibliography of print and online sources, whether using a program such as Zotero or in a word processing document, helps you assess what sources you are using, the balance of primary and secondary materials, and whether or not you need to seek out new kinds of sources to gain a well-rounded perspective on an issue.

Footnotes for a history assignment may vary slightly from those required in other courses. Here are some guidelines to follow for citing various kinds of electronic sources if you do not receive specific instructions in class. The follow-
ing guidelines are based on the *Chicago Manual of Style*, Fifteenth Edition, and are specific for footnotes or endnotes. For bibliography or reference list styles, visit *The Chicago Manual of Style Online* “Citation Quick Guide,” [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

**Website**  List the author or organization that is responsible for the website, followed by the title of the subsection in quotation marks (if relevant) and the website title in italics, each separated by a comma. Next, list the URL and the date of access in parentheses.


**Source from an Online Database**  List the author of the source (if available) followed by the name of the source in quotation marks, name of the database in italics, URL, and date accessed.


**Book Published Electronically**  List the author(s) of the book, followed by the title, publisher, URL, and date accessed.


**Journal Article Published Electronically**  List the author(s) of the article, article title in quotation marks, journal title and publication information, publisher, URL, and date accessed.


**Weblog (Blog) Entry or Comment**  List the author of the entry or comment, followed by identifying information on the entry or comment, name of the blog, date posted, URL, and date accessed.

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An Introduction to World History Research Online


Email Message List the author of the email, identify it as an email message, include the subject header when possible, and add the date on which it was sent. If the email is personal, note that but do not include the author’s email address. Ask permission from the author before citing a personal email message.


Listserv Message The format is similar to an email message, but you should include the email address of the listserv.


Using This Guide

This collection of 150 websites is intended as a guide — rather than as an exhaustive list — to finding valuable online resources for exploring world history. The editors selected these websites to illustrate the strengths of the Internet for learning about the past and to demonstrate the incredible range of resources and perspectives available, from electronic texts of Sumerian literature [19] through official documents and diary entries related to the U.S. decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan [136]. Many excellent websites were not included, but those we have chosen represent some of the best materials available for understanding a broad range of topics and time periods in world history. The emphasis in World History Matters is on non-U.S. history websites to complement guides that focus solely on online U.S. history. The U.S. history websites that have been included here address global trends, such as the transatlantic slave trade (Slaves and the Courts, 1740–1860 [92]), American participation in world events, such as World War I (The Stars and Stripes: The American Soldiers’ Newspaper of World War I, 1918–19 [122]), or large-scale migration or immigration (Korean American Digital Archive [112] or Hispano Music & Culture from the Northern Rio Grande [111]).

Throughout World History Matters, symbols identify the kinds of resources available on each website. indicates that there are significant written primary sources, such as literary works, official documents, religious texts, letters, or

diaries. 📊 includes photographs, paintings, drawings, and artifacts. 🎧 means that audio files, usually music, speeches, or oral history interviews, are available. 🎥 signifies that a website offers film or video clips, ranging from early film footage to contemporary commercials and interviews. 🌐 indicates quantitative resources, such as census or price data. 🗺 identifies the presence of cartographic resources.

The first section, “General Websites for World History Research,” introduces resources that cover broad periods of time. Some of these are general, such as World Art Treasures [16], with 100,000 images from all time periods and all corners of the world. Others deal with a specific topic or kind of resource across centuries, such as ArchNet [2] which emphasizes urban planning and design throughout the Muslim world. The subsequent chapters focus on broad time periods covered in world history survey courses, from the beginnings of human society to the present. We have organized this section into eight chronological groupings. Many websites fall into more than one category, however, and these are cross-referenced at the end of each chronological section (called “More Related Websites”).

The Beginnings of Human Society Through 1000 B.C.E.
Classical Traditions, Major Religions, and Giant Empires, 1000 B.C.E.–300 C.E.
Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300–1000 C.E.
Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000–1500
Emergence of the First Global Age, 1450–1770
An Age of Revolutions, 1750–1914
A Half-Century of Crisis and Achievement, 1900–1945
Promises and Paradoxes: The World Since 1945

In the appendix, you will find a glossary of common Internet terms. The index will provide a valuable starting point for locating resources on a specific topic (e.g., “Economy,” “Daily Life,” “Slavery,” “Women”), area of the world (e.g., “Africa” or “North America”), or kinds of primary sources (e.g., “Archaeology,” “Maps,” “Newspapers”). Types of primary sources are listed in italics; regions are listed in bold. In addition, all of the websites included in this book are listed alphabetically by title on page 113.

— Kelly Schrum and T. Mills Kelly
Key to the Icons

This website contains written primary sources, such as literary works, official documents, letters, or diaries.

This website contains images, such as photographs, paintings, drawings, and artifacts.

This website contains audio files, such as music, speeches, or oral history interviews.

This website contains film or video clips.

This website contains quantitative resources, such as census or price data.

This website contains maps and other cartographic resources.