Source List Entry—This term is the one routinely used herein to demonstrate the citation of specific items in a Source List.

COMMON PRACTICES

2.11   Citing Derivatives & Imaged Sources

The range of materials and media in use today defies standardization. When we examine a publication to define the elements that need recording, we should bear in mind that this material commonly has two formats in need of identification:

- most such material *originated in manuscript or book format*—whether in modern times or antiquity;
- most such material is *now being published in a new format* by a firm or an agency that is not the original creator.

Therefore, our citation should do the following:

- distinguish between image copies and other derivatives, such as abstracts, transcripts, and information extracted into databases;
- credit properly the original creator;
- credit properly the producer of the film or electronic publication;
- identify clearly the nature of the material;
- identify the film or electronic publication completely enough for others to locate it;
- cite the specific place (page, frame, etc.) on the roll, fiche, or database at which we found the relevant detail; and
- cite the date on which the microform or electronic data set was created (if that information is provided), updated, or accessed—as well as the date of the relevant record.

Some publishers of film and electronic reproductions supply a preface informing us that they obtained their data from another firm or individual. Even so, to analyze the reliability of their material we also need to know

- the identity of the *original* compiler (individual or agency) who first assembled that data set;
- the original source(s) from which the data were taken;
- whether the database represents full or partial extraction from those sources; or
- whether it was generated from materials randomly encountered by the original compiler.

Tracking the provenance (origin) of material of this type can be difficult. A currently marketed database may have been purchased from a firm no longer in existence, which may have bought its information from a book compiler, who may have assembled materials randomly published elsewhere. Such a database could be of radically different quality from one issued by, say, a learned society using skilled copyists to extract every document in a record set or an image collection created by a company that contracts with an archive to reproduce an entire record series.

If our attempts to track the origin of the material are unsuccessful, we should say so and explain the efforts we made. This will help us and others avoid unnecessary repetition of the same. When we carefully report our steps, we or a user of our work may be able later to plug some of the gaps in our research process or our findings.

2.12 Citing Indexes & Finding Aids

In the framework of history research, an index is usually a tool, rather than a record. Typically, indexes are used in three ways, each of which involves different considerations for citations and analyses.

INITIAL STEP IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS

When an index points us to a source and we proceed to consult that source, we rarely need to cite the index. An exception would be a case in which an index provides some sort of special insight.

TEMPORARY STEP IN AN ONGOING RESEARCH PROCESS

In the course of our research, we may access a microfilmed index or an electronic database to a record set, while the records themselves are not immediately available. In such cases, we take our notes from that index and we cite that index as the source of those notes. As a rule, this is a policy for our working files only. Our pursuit of reliable evidence dictates that we proceed to use the actual records rather than make judgments on the basis of index details that the compiler has presented out of context. Once we examine the actual record set, we report our findings from that search and cite the actual records.

STATISTICS OR BACKGROUND PERSPECTIVES

On occasion, to add perspective to our conclusions, we may compile statistics from an index or analyze it for patterns. In other cases, clerks who created index entries at the same time they recorded legal and sacramental acts may have amplified the index with details about the parties that do not appear in the main documents. In such cases, the index itself is a source to be cited on its own merits.