Hello, I'm Sarah Duke, and I am the Curator of Popular and Applied Graphic Art in the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress, and I work with cartoon and caricature collections as well as historical prints and drawings. One of the great things about the Library of Congress is the wealth of primary source materials. It could be a tape. It could be a manuscript. It could be a musical score. It could be an original taping of a television broadcasting newscast or program. These things are a document that describes the relationship from the point of creation - the thoughts that a person had while creating, and in many ways serve as a dialogue whether it's between the original artist, the regional writer, their editor, their colleagues, their collaborators, their publishers.

It's very interesting to see what happens when you look at primary source materials. They're often marked up because they're works in progress. They convey much more information than the final published book, the air-cast television show, the radio broadcast, the editorial cartoon in the newspaper. For example, if one were two read in a textbook in 1929, the Great Depression occurred and it was awful. That means nothing to you today. But, if you look at primary source materials - whether it be letters from farmers who lost their livelihoods, migrants who traversed the country in search of employment, artists who've just created heart-wrenching works as they addressed the uncertainties of life - you would get a much more immediate sense of what the Great Depression meant to Americans living in 1929, than a textbook can convey to you.

That's the wonder of primary source materials. They take you so much better into the past than secondary source materials can, because they reflect the immediacy of reflections that people who were living in that time had. So I would highly recommend taking your research another step and really looking at primary source materials. They enrich your sense of understanding of history in a way that a textbook cannot.