



# Roots & Reels - Manual

## What kinds of sources can you use?

INTERNATIONAL HISTORY COMPETITION

FOR YOUNG DIGITAL STORYTELLERS (13-27)

## What story from the past still speaks to you today?

- Organised by: IDMC - Institute for Democracy, Media & Culture
- Initiated by: EUSTORY
- Supported by: Körber-Stiftung

# What kinds of sources can you use?

Roots & Reels (R&R) invites short films that connect history, memory, and heritage to the present, and the submission form explicitly asks you to:

1

Explain what your film is about and why it matters today

2

List "Sources used (at least 2) + credits"

(e.g., archives, photos, letters, interviews, objects, places), including licences for any third-party media.

- ❑ R&R also flags a key challenge for young creators: online feeds can shape historical understanding in ways that may be misleading or manipulative, so filmmakers are expected to show where their story comes from and to document sources transparently

1



2



# What counts as a "historical source" in R&R?

In R&R, a "historical source" means evidence you use to support your narrative, not only texts, but also images, audio, testimonies, and material culture.

R&R explicitly recognises sources such as:

- archival documents,
- photos,
- newspapers,
- recordings,
- oral history interviews/testimonies,
- family albums/letters/diaries, and places/monuments/objects.



# Academic framing

## Primary sources

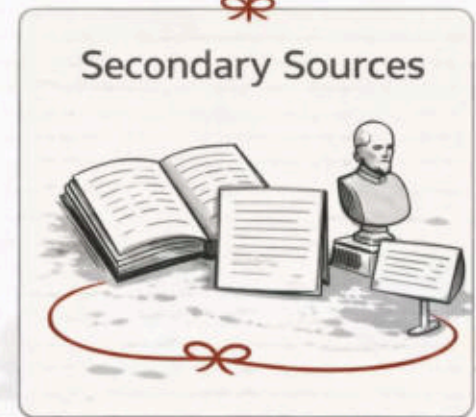
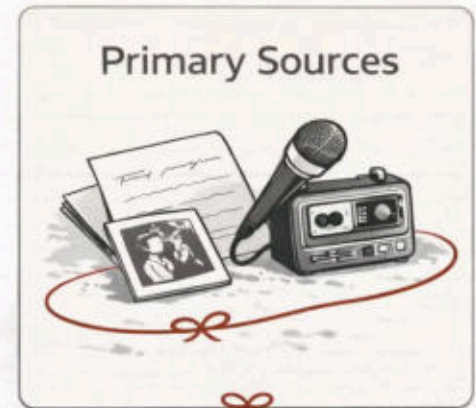
Primary sources are created at the time, or constitute direct evidence (e.g., letters, photographs, objects, interviews, official records).  
(Library of Congress, 2020; Library of Congress, 2022)



## Secondary sources

Secondary sources interpret or analyse the past afterwards (e.g., scholarly books/articles, museum explanatory texts).  
(Library of Congress, 2022)

**Using both is methodologically strong because it combines evidence (primary) with interpretation/context (secondary), which helps you avoid unsupported claims. (Library of Congress, 2022)**



## "R&R-compliant" source strategy



## What juries can see in 3 minutes?

A film can be very creative and still demonstrate academic rigour if you make your sources visible:

### Minimum requirement: at least two sources

R&R explicitly requires you to list at least two historical sources in the submission form.

### The "why it matters today" bridge

R&R asks you to explain why the story matters. This is effectively your research relevance statement: what does the past help us understand about the present?

### Evidence + attribution + rights (credits)

R&R expects source listing plus credits/licences for any non-original music/images/footage.

**Best source  
types for young  
filmmakers!**



# 1. Family & personal archives

1

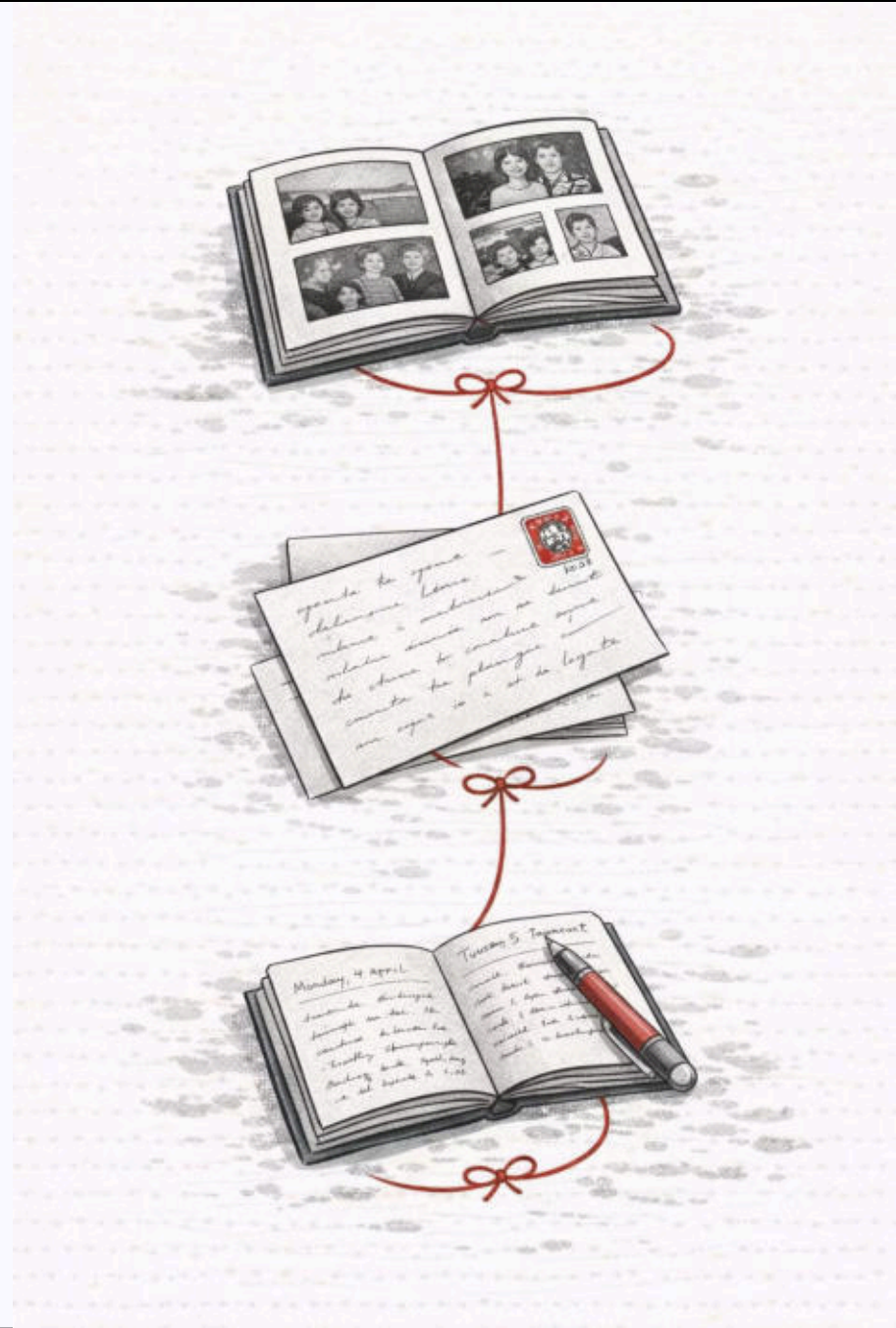
## What they are

First-hand traces of lived experience (photos, albums, letters, diaries), which function as primary sources when they come from the time/experience being documented. (Library of Congress, 2022; IDMC, 2026)

2

## How to use in film

Close-ups of handwriting/stamps; "then vs now" match cuts; on-screen credit: "Family archive, 1998."



## 2. Oral history interviews & testimonies

1

### What they are

Recorded testimony and interviews used as primary evidence of lived experience, and explicitly accepted by R&R. (IDMC, 2026)

2

### Ethics baseline

Oral history best practice emphasises informed consent, clarity about use, and attention to potential harm or vulnerability. (Oral History Association, 2022)

3

### How to use in film

Build the story around one strong quote; film hands/objects if anonymity is needed. (Oral History Association, 2022)

## 3. Archives, libraries, and official records

### What they are

Documents/records (letters, registers, maps, lists) that provide traceable evidence and are a core R&R source type. (IDMC, 2026)

### How to use in film

Show the document + a short label (archive name/date); highlight one line as your "proof moment." (National Archives [U.S.], 2011)





📷 PRIMARY SOURCES

## 4. Photographs

1

### What they are

Photos often operate as primary sources because they record people/places/objects at a specific time. (Library of Congress, 2020; Library of Congress, 2022; IDMC, 2026)

2

### How to use in film

Recreate the same angle today; place the photo physically in the scene (on a table/in a hand) to make it cinematic. (IDMC, 2026)



PRIMARY OR SECONDARY

## 5. Newspapers & periodicals

### What they are

Newspapers can be primary evidence of how an event was framed at the time, or secondary if they are later commentary/analysis. (Library of Congress, 2022; IDMC, 2026)

### How to use in film

Headline montage; compare two outlets to show framing/bias; anchor a timeline with an exact publication date. (Library of Congress, 2022)



 PRIMARY SOURCES

## 6. Recordings (audio/video)

1

### What they are

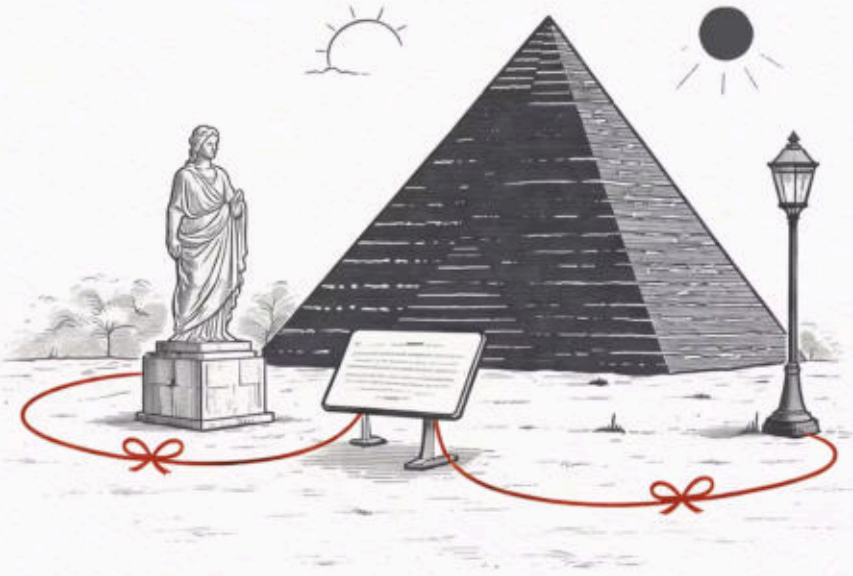
Recordings are direct evidence (voices, sounds, events) and are explicitly accepted by R&R. (IDMC, 2026)

2

### How to use in film

Layer short archival audio under today's visuals ("old sound / new images") to create emotional contrast. (IDMC, 2026)

## 7. Places, monuments, and objects



1

### What they are

"Material culture" (sites/objects) can serve as primary evidence when documented and interpreted carefully, and R&R explicitly welcomes this category. (IDMC, 2026; Library of Congress, 2022)

2

### How to use in film

Film a plaque/street name/memorial/factory; add one corroborating source (photo/newspaper/interview) so your claim is evidence-based. (Library of Congress, 2022)

SECONDARY; SOMETIMES PRIMARY

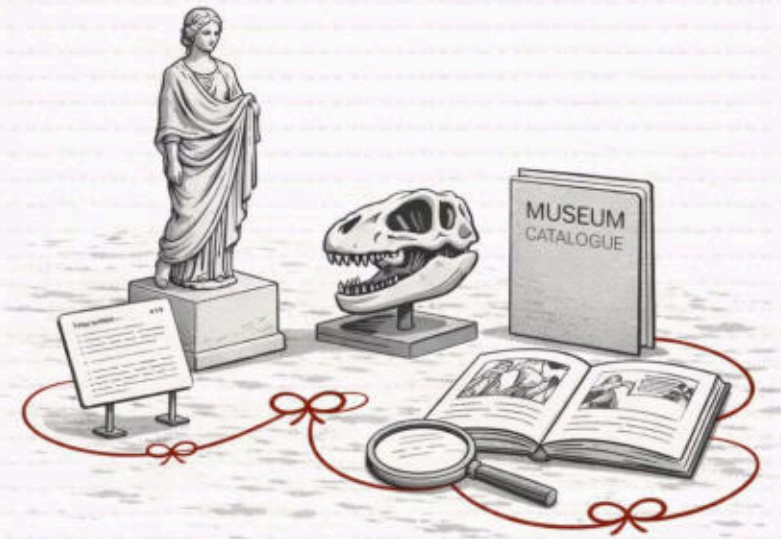
## 8. Museum collection entries & exhibition catalogues

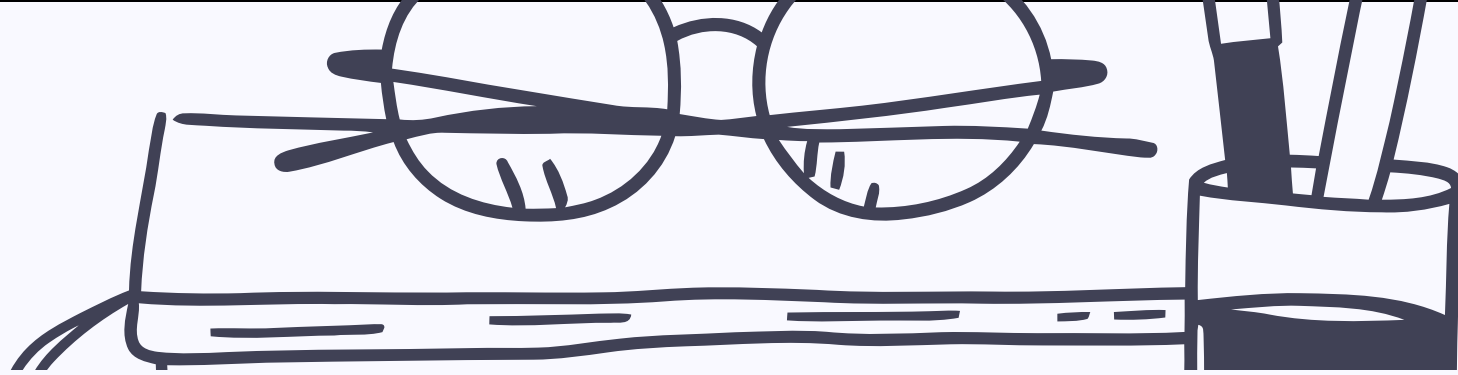
### What they are

Museum labels/curatorial text usually provide secondary interpretation, while the artefact in the collection is primary material evidence; using the official collection entry improves traceability. (Library of Congress, 2022)

### How to use in film

Show the object's museum listing (title/date/collection); overlay a one-line curator explanation; cite the official page/catalogue in credits. (Library of Congress, 2022)





 SECONDARY SOURCES

## 9. Scholarly sources (books/journal articles)

1

### What they are

Peer-reviewed articles and academic books provide secondary analysis that helps define concepts and explain context (e.g., migration routes, censorship, diaspora identity). (Library of Congress, 2022)

2

### How to use in film

Use one key sentence as a "context card" (5 - 8 seconds) with an on-screen citation; avoid dumping theory—use it to clarify meaning. (Library of Congress, 2022)



SECONDARY; SOMETIMES PRIMARY

## 10. Government / institutional reports & datasets



### What they are

Official reports and datasets can provide verifiable context (policy changes, statistics, public records); they may function as primary evidence when they are original records of the institution's actions or data collection. (Library of Congress, 2022)



### How to use in film

Put one clear statistic on screen (with source/year); pair it with a personal story (interview/object) to keep the film human. (Library of Congress, 2022)

# A short "source criticism" checklist

This turns your film into a mini research project without making it boring:

1

**Provenance: Who created it?**

(Library of Congress, 2022)

2

**Date & version: When was it created; is it original or re-uploaded?**

(Library of Congress, 2022)

3

**Purpose & audience: Why was it produced and for whom?**

(Library of Congress, 2022)

4

**Perspective & silences: Whose voice is missing?**

(Library of Congress, 2022)

5

**Corroboration: Can another source confirm or complicate it?**

(Library of Congress, 2022)

6

**Use rights: Do you have permission/licence to include it?**

(IDMC, 2026a)

# APA 7 citations for R&R

1

## A) In-text citations (standard)

Use author + year in the voiceover script text, subtitles, or your written submission notes. (APA Style, n.d.-b)

2

## B) Personal communications (private sources)

Use only in-text when the reader cannot retrieve it (private interviews, private messages, unreleased family letters). Do not put these in your reference list. (APA Style, n.d.-a; APA Style, n.d.-b)



# "Sources + credits" structure

that matches the R&R submission form

R&R explicitly asks for "Sources used (at least 2) + credits" and requires credits/licences for third-party media. (IDMC, 2026a)

## 📄 Template

(A. Surname, personal communication, Month Day, Year) (APA Style, n.d.-a)

Use this structure (clean and academic):

### Historical sources (evidence)

1. [APA reference]
2. [APA reference]

### Interviews

Interview with [Name], recorded [date], [place], used with permission. (Oral History Association, 2022)

### Third-party visuals/music

[Title] – [Creator] – [Source] – [Licence/permission]. (IDMC, 2026a)

# References

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- Oral History Association. (2022). OHA principles and best practices [PDF]. <https://oralhistory.org/principles-and-best-practices/>

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Questions?

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