Informative Essay (A Famous Manmade Structure): Secondary Sources

For this essay, you are writing about a famous manmade structure, and you are required to use secondary sources. This document provides information about at least some of the secondary sources that are available.

Points to Consider:

* Consider the credibility of a source, especially a website.
* Note the objectivity or subjectivity used to report the information. You should avoid sources that present the information mostly subjectively.
* Prepare to devote time to the search for information. You may need several hours to locate some valuable sources.
* Realize that one source may not supply much information about a desired topic but that it may provide ideas, links, terms, and lists of additional sources to guide subsequent research.
* Consult the reference librarians. They can not only identify additional secondary sources but also provide strategies to hone your research skills. Do you know why you would sometimes include quotation marks around the search phrase “Golden Gate Bridge”? A librarian does, and you should as well.

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Getting Started:

You may consider the selection of a topic for this essay and the gathering of research a daunting task, but it may represent the exact opposite if you begin with Google or another similar search engine. If you are searching for a list of buildings, then use such search phrases as “architectural feats of ancient Rome,” “controversial buildings,” “haunted castles,” or “monuments in America.” Additionally, you can use Google or a similar search engine to locate information about a specific type of structure by typing such search phrases as “Gothic cathedrals in France” or “skyscrapers under construction in America.” Also, you can explore topics by the names of architects instead of by the names or types of buildings; you can simply use the search phrase “famous architects.”

Google and similar search engines often provide individuals with a list of sources that may lack credibility. However, individuals can use these sources as stepping stones to ones that are credible. For example, when the instructor typed the search phrase “famous architects,” he was directed to Wikipedia, a site that lacks credibility, but he read through the list of architects and selected Frank Lloyd Wright to guide his next step. With this name, he located a credible website sponsored by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. It provides such information as a biography of the architect and visuals of and information about some of his structures (Fallingwater in Pennsylvania, for instance).

Types of Secondary Sources:

Books:

Granted, in the second decade of the 21st century, some individuals overlook books (print or otherwise) as valuable sources of information. Instead, they rely on the Internet to access information. While the Internet can furnish individuals with a multitude of sources about famous manmade structures, individuals should pay a visit to the library, locate some books, and use them.

The library has many books. It has ones related to a specific manmade structure (Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, for instance) and others to general types of structures (cathedrals). The library has several books about Notre Dame, such as *Notre-Dame in Paris*, in which the author discusses a variety of subjects: the 12th-century rebuilding of this cathedral and the 19th-century restoration of it. Simply use the search phrase “Notre Dame” to locate them. In addition, the library has several books about cathedrals, such as *Cathedrals*, in which appears information about not only well-known European cathedrals but also such lesser known ones as the Cathedral of the Holy Family in Kenya. Use the search term “cathedrals” to locate them.

Besides books about structures, the library has books about architects and structures associated with them. For example, there are books about Christopher Wren and Frank Lloyd Wright. Use the name of the architect to locate any books about him or her and his or her structures. Sometimes, you may not have the name of an architect but rather the name of a group to which that architect belonged—the Bauhaus in Germany, to illustrate. In this instance, the library has books about this group. Use the search term “Bauhaus” to locate them. Additionally, you should search for books by the name of a specific architectural style, such as the Byzantine and Victorian styles; you should also consider a search by architectural terms or even techniques. Perhaps the library has books explaining the connection between cantilevering and bridges or between flying buttresses and Gothic cathedrals.

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Databases:

The library subscribes to databases which you can access through the library’s website. One in particular may supply invaluable information.

* The *Britannica Academic Edition* database – This database has information about specific manmade structures, architects, and even architectural techniques. While some of the articles are brief, the writers of them identify terms associated with a structure that you can use to guide subsequent research. When you read the article about Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany, the terms “Disneyland’s Sleeping Beauty Castle,” “neo-Gothic,” “Richard Wagner,” and, naturally, “Mad King Ludwig” are identified.

These databases may also supply valuable information:

* *Academic Search Complete*
* *Art and Architecture Complete*
* *Humanities Full Text*
* *Omnifile Full Text Mega*

Official Websites of Famous Manmade Structures:

Most famous manmade structures have a credible website. When using Google or a similar search engine to locate such a website, type this search phrase: “the official website of \_\_\_\_\_.” For instance, the Taj Mahal in India has an official website sponsored by the Department of Tourism for India, with information about not only its architectural styles and history but also the endearing story behind its construction; photographs of the Taj Mahal are included, too. The Great Wall of China, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the Sydney Opera House also have official websites.

Websites for Architects or Groups of Architects:

Some famous architects may have credible websites devoted to them and their structures. Frank Lloyd Wright has one sponsored by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe have ones as well. Even a group of architects may have a credible website or at least a posting accessed through a credible website devoted to another topic. To illustrate, at the credible Jewish Virtual Library website sponsored by the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, there is posted an article about Bauhaus architecture in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Other Websites:

The World Heritage List sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) provides valuable information. Essentially, it “includes [nearly 1000] properties forming part of the cultured and natural heritage which the World Heritage Committee considers as having outstanding universal value.” This list has postings for such well-known structures as the Statue of Liberty in New York and for such lesser known structures as an ancient Mayan city in Mexico and the churches of Chiloe in Chile. In addition, there are pictures of the structures.

The Great Buildings Collection sponsored by *Architecture Week* supplies information about buildings and architects. For example, for Gustave Eiffel, there is a biography of his architectural career, and there is a page devoted to perhaps the most famous structure associated with him—the Eiffel Tower. Although the information for most architects and buildings is brief, a list of resources appears at the bottom of each page, permitting individuals to access additional information through other resources. However, individuals must determine the credibility of these resources.

