

Conducting documentary research

Documentary research provides a better understanding of the distinctive characteristics of community involved in the project. It can also be an opportunity to discover research that has already been done, to build on it and avoid duplicating work. Questions are likely to emerge from discoveries, providing an opportunity to personally learn more from community members about certain topics.

Potential Elements

What are the potential elements of documentation?

Possible types of documentation and formats

Throughout our research, it is quite possible that we will come across different formats of documentation, both physical and digital.

The most common formats are newspaper articles, published scholarly articles, books, maps, family trees, photographs, objects, etc.

Audiovisual material may be somewhat less accessible, as some formats require special devices to access the content. Audiovisual material includes CD-ROMs and DVDs, but also film reels, audio cassettes, VHS films, etc.

It should be noted that, libraries or archives generally have the equipment required to access this content.

Checklist

Here are the types of documents you may come across during documentary research:

- Text documents
Reports, newspaper articles, scientific/academic publications, books, etc.
- Iconographic documents
Photographs, pictures, drawings, postcards, posters, prints, paintings, plans, technical drawings, sketches, cartoons, slides, photo essays, etc.
- Cartographic documents
Maps, plans, sketches, etc.
- Audio documents
News reports, interviews, movies, home movies, television series, documentaries, songs, audio books, audio cassettes, compact discs (CDs), video cassettes/video discs, microfiche, radio recordings, television recordings, etc.

