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Classifying Sources According to Use:
Bizup's BEAM

While many classifications of research sources stress what they *are* (e.g. primary, secondary, tertiary), Joseph Bizup (2008) makes the argument that it is more useful for writers to classify their sources according to their *use* (75). This more accurately represents the fact that the same sources will be used differently according to the writer's purpose and can help writers think critically about their research and arguments. Bizup has developed the acronym BEAM as a mneumonic for the four common source uses he has observed: *background*, *exhibits*, *arguments*, and *methods* (75). Academic writing tends to use a combination of all four, though this will differ according to the situation and discipline.

See: Bizup, J. (2008). BEAM: A rhetorical vocabulary for teaching research-based writing. *Rhetoric Review, 27*(1), 72–86.

Background
B

Definition: Sources used to supply evidence or general background information. Writer sees as authoritative and expects readers to as well. Some material seen as "common knowledge"

Example: In a rhetorical analysis of President Obama's first inaugural address, sources used to describe its context would be background sources (e.g. his campaign, the historical nature of his election, the transition from President Bush, the Great Recession, etc.)

Exhibit
E

Definition: Sources used as the *focus* of analysis or interpretation, as well as examples. Bizup stresses that these are not simply evidence for an argument, but also serve as the *occasion* for analysis and argument.

Example: In a rhetorical analysis of President Obama's first inaugural address, the address itself would serve as the exhibit, which may be recreated through multiple sources that would try to communicate its complexity (transcripts, videos, photos, audio recordings, etc.).

Argument
A

Definition: Sources that are part of the conversation the writer is participating in. The writer responds to them in some way as peers (if to affirm or extend). Biologists generally respond to other biologists, and so on.

Example: In a rhetorical analysis of President Obama's first inaugural address, the writer might respond to other rhetorical analyses of presidential speeches or of the inaugural genre. The writer might also put her work in conversation with sources on rhetorical theory more broadly.

Method
M

Definition: Sources that provide a model or framework for the writer's approach. These may be models of a method of analysis or theoretical sources that lay out a school of thought with methodological implications.

Example: In a rhetorical analysis of President Obama's first inaugural address, the writer might reference other analyses of presidential speeches as models for her method of analysis (rather than as the conversation). The writer may also use a specific theoretical approach—such as genre theory—and cite those sources.