

Info skills

Types of information sources



Introduction

Think about the different types of resource you need to use to find the information you identified as relevant to your particular assignment. It is always best to find information from many different places. If you use a variety of different resources, such as those shown below, you will naturally end up with a good mix of raw material for your assignment.

Types of information resources

1. Books

Books are a good starting point when you begin to explore a new subject area. They provide the background knowledge needed to understand the more up-to-date, focused content that you will find in journals. Remember, no matter how recently a book has been published, it may well not contain the most up-to-date research and thinking on the topic, because of the length of time it takes a book to go through the publishing process. Reference books, like encyclopaedias, may be useful when you start reading round a topic but the information is likely to be at least five years old. The best way to find books is to try the Library Search. Your module reading lists will also be very helpful.

2. Journals

A journal is a regular publication which collects articles on a particular topic, usually written by university academics who are experts in the area. To find out the latest developments in any subject you must use information from the journals and journal articles as well as books.

The best way to find a specific journal is to search the Library Search by journal title. To look for articles on particular topics, you can search the databases using keywords. To find which databases are suitable for your subject area, see the Subject databases guide.

3. The Internet

The internet can be a good place to find many different types of information. As well as popular information, the web is useful for official reports and statistics from government sites. Some websites are written by experts and scholars. However, anyone can publish to the web so you need to evaluate what you find very carefully. See the 'Evaluating websites' guide for more information. Subject gateways are a good way to get quality-controlled, academic information from the web. [Google scholar](#) is a useful tool for searching.

4. Newspapers and other press

Newspapers, magazines, current affairs publications and trade journals are a good source of information for current events and developments in areas such as culture, politics and science. Older newspapers can be useful to get an insight into the past. While such articles are useful for an up-to-the-minute picture of a certain topic or to provide background to a particularly controversial topic, they are unlikely to carry the same academic rigour as an article in a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal. The database [Nexis UK](#) contains the full text of most UK newspapers and some international ones.

5. Conference Proceedings

The outcome of research is often presented at a conference before journal articles are written. Conference proceedings are a good way to find very up-to-date information. The best way to find conference proceedings is to search relevant databases for your subject area. See the 'Subject databases' guide.

6. Archives and collections

There may be more unusual information which would add depth and quality to your assignment in specialist resources such as archives and other collections. Archives are collections of unpublished historical documents that provide useful first-hand information on specific topics and periods of time. Collections are groups of resources on a particular subject often photographs, drawings, slides and other media that could be hard to find otherwise in one place. Some specialist resources may be available online. The best way to find out what's available is to look on your [Subject Support Page](#).

7. Other types of information

You may have identified the need for other specialised information in order to complete your assignment. This could be statistics, government reports, British Standards, building regulations, marketing reports, company information, trend predictions, advertising materials, etc. All these types of information can be found by searching the same databases which you would use to locate journal articles. See the 'Subject databases' guide for the relevant databases for your subject. Ask your Subject Librarian if you need more help locating specific resources.

If you have any problem locating material on your particular area of research, contact your [Subject Librarian](#) who will be happy to help you in a one-to-one appointment.

Primary and secondary sources

You will produce a better assignment if you include both primary and secondary material in your research. A primary source is an original document containing first-hand information. A secondary source is something written about a primary source. The table below provides examples of primary and secondary sources of the information resources.

Resource	Primary Source	Secondary Source
Books	An autobiography.	A biography.
Journals	An article written by a scientist about his own research.	An article by an academic regarding the involvement of the UN in Kosovo.
The Internet	London Fashion Week's official website.	A blog about London Fashion week.
Newspapers and other press	A news report on a current event.	An article by a political commentator stating his views on a current event.
Conference Proceedings	A paper delivered on someone's own research.	A paper delivered by a researcher on someone else's research.
Specialist Resources	East London Theatre Archive which displays material such as posters and photographs.	WGSN, a fashion database, which comments on current and future trends in fashion.