

Chapter 6: Research and Reference Materials

Overview

Research requires some knowledge of the topic, organizational skills, and time to search. This chapter outlines some information to help in a research project; it includes preliminary steps, research, and evaluating the information that is found.

Lecture Notes

A. Research Procedures

The research procedures used will directly reflect the quality of the end-product produced using the information.

1. **Understanding the Purpose of the Research** includes asking questions like: What is needed? How will it be used? Who is the audience?
2. **Listing Possible Information Sources** that might be used will help organize the search.
 - a. Facilities should be identified.
 - b. Types of references can be narrowed down to give the researcher a good start.
 - c. Personal contacts should be listed with their pertinent information so that interviews can be scheduled conveniently.
 - d. Computer searches may help gather some of the types of information.
 - e. Internet searches can result in specific information about a particular organization, its products or services, or an industry; they also allow access to newspapers and other periodicals.
3. **Determining Special Research Costs** is important in order to establish and stay in a budget; costs may come from travel, telephone, computer searches, printing, or additional office support.
4. **Making Appointments for Research** will ensure someone at the facility has the time and attention to answer questions.
5. **Keeping Complete Records of Research Information** is essential when you go back and prepare a final report.
 - a. Preparing a bibliography should include complete information on each reference using a 3x5 card or computer. This information may also be necessary if you need to find the reference again.
 - b. Taking appropriate reading notes manually or using the computer will give the writer plenty of information to use when writing.
 - c. Duplicating materials for later reference can be done from microform viewers; however, copyright laws should be observed whenever copies are made.
 - d. Recording interview information completely using an interview guide, notes, recorded interview, and transcripts will make the information useful in the writing phase.

B. Research Facilities

A wide variety of research facilities might be available through a personal visit or online. The Internet provides a vast array of references that might not have been convenient before.

1. **Libraries** are available through the public, companies or organizations, and schools. Library consortiums offer a link with other libraries to expand the offerings to researchers.
 - a. Classification systems are used to organize the works in a library; the two standardized systems are the Dewey Decimal system and Library of Congress system. *Remind students that these were discussed in the first section of the text.*
 - b. A vertical file service offers pamphlets, booklets, or leaflets that are not indexed in the card catalog.
 - c. Reference collections are available for research on-site; they usually cannot be checked out. Special permission may be necessary for copying.
 - d. Interlibrary networks offer items from different libraries for lending through a computer system and the network.
 - e. Computer databases allow access to information in a particular field or profession; research studies, court cases, and other information is available.
 - f. Library micrographics centers allow researchers to view references stored on microforms.
2. **In-House Research Searches** may be available.
 - a. Research departments are available in organizations that are heavily involved in research.
 - b. Information banks and services are available by subscription; they are specific to a field or profession.
 - c. Business archives are a collection of documents of historical value to an organization; they are created so researchers can access information that is protected with high levels of security.
3. **Business and Professional Associations** will have information specific to a specific profession and the association itself. Information is available through personal visits, telephone calls, writing letters, or visiting Web sites.
4. **Community Organizations** that might be useful include the chamber of commerce, Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions. Learning about the group is especially helpful if members are part of the audience in a presentation.

C. Information References

A variety of resources are available, depending on the information that is being sought. Be sure to evaluate and choose the best resources for the topic or information. *Review the examples under each type of reference.*

1. **Almanac and Fact Books** account facts annually.
2. **Biographical Indexes and Dictionaries** highlight the achievements of individuals who made contributions in their field.

3. **Book and Periodical Directories and Indexes** provides listings of organizations, products, and individuals in a systematic way (alphabetically, by subject, or geographically).
4. **Business, Governmental, and Professional Directories and Publications** can provide information about their entity and its members.
 - a. Professional associations maintain Web sites with information about the association, its members, and publications.
 - b. Governmental directories, records, and information are available through GPO access without restrictions; the Web site is www.access.gpo.gov/. *Review the types of information found on this site.*
 - c. Business directories and publications are privately published; information included may be research or directories.
5. **Business Newspapers and Periodicals** provide current business information; many of them have online editions available by subscription (or a scaled back version for free).
6. **Dictionaries** are very useful reference books.
 - a. General dictionaries assist with finding spellings, meanings, and syllabication of a word; many of the latest editions are available online.
 - b. Specialty dictionaries include terminology related to a specific field or specific types of information.
 - c. Other professional dictionaries are developed by organizations for a specific field.
7. **Encyclopedias** provide information on a variety of topics; some provide annual supplements, versions on electronic media, or access to information online.
8. **Etiquette References** focus on social behavior and conduct.
9. **Financial Services References** provide the latest information on financial markets on a subscription basis.
10. **Mailing and Shipping Publications** include rates, ZIP codes, and other shipping information. *Suggest the postal service Web site www.usps.com.*
11. **Newsletters and Reports** are published by businesses and other organizations with current information; they are issued on a regular basis (weekly, monthly, quarterly).
12. **Newspaper Indexes** make it easier to research information found in newspapers; they list the subjects or news items that are found in the various issues.
13. **Office Administration Reference Books** offer information on a variety of business and office topics.
14. **Parliamentary Procedures Manuals** provide an excellent reference for meetings; participants should be aware of the process that meetings will follow. It may be helpful to have these reference books at the meetings.
15. **Quotations** can be helpful when creating presentations; they list quotations that can be interjected in the speech.

16. A **Thesaurus** is a listing of synonyms and antonyms.
17. **Travel and Transportation Guides** are helpful for travel; they are available at bookstores and motor clubs.
18. **Word Books** present an alphabetical list of words; they show the spelling, syllabication, and recommended hyphenation.
19. **Writing Style Manuals** help with a variety of document types; they are an excellent resource when preparing documents that might not be prepared often.

D. Evaluating Information References

The author and content should be evaluated for authenticity, especially for information found on the World Wide Web. *Emphasize the importance of verifying accuracy before using the information found.*

1. **The Author or Institution** from which the information originated should be checked. *Review the points listed on p. 181.*
2. **Currency of Information** should also be looked at; check to see how recent it is and whether or not there have been any updates.
3. **The Intended Audience** of the publication should be checked to be sure that the source is designed for that group of people.
4. **Accurate and Objective Content** is critical with all information; examine for biases, citations, and opinions.

Additional Resources for Students

Recommended readings (no texts should be more than two years old):

- Calkins-Fulton, Patsy J. and Joanna D. Hanks. *Office Technology and Procedures*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Oliverio and Pasewark. *The Office: Procedures and Technology*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Quible, Zane K. *Administrative Office Management – An Introduction*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Ray, C., J. Palmer, and A. Wohl. *Office Automation: A Systems Approach*. South-Western Publishing Co.
- Regan, Elizabeth A. and Bridget N. O'Connor. *Automating the Office—Office Systems and End-User Computing*. Macmillan City.
- Robek, Brown, and Stephens. *Information and Records Management*.
- Scriven, Kozell, Myers, and Hapke. *Professional Office Procedures*. Glencoe/McGraw-Hill.
- Tilton, R., J. Jackson, and S. Rigby. *The Electronic Office: Procedures and Administration*. South-Western Publishing Co.

Current issues of periodicals or business publications are also an excellent resource. Some of the following periodicals have an accompanying Web site.

<i>Current Periodical</i>	<i>Web Address</i>
<i>Gregg Reference Manual</i>	
<i>IAAP Complete Office Handbook</i>	http://www.iaap-hq.org/products/handbook.htm
<i>Modern Office Technology</i>	
<i>OfficePro</i>	http://www.iaap-hq.org/officepro/toc.htm
<i>The Office</i>	

Other research Web sites might be helpful; refer to some of those listed in the chapter.