

# Guide to Reviewing the Literature in the Social Sciences and the Humanities Researcher Guide

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## Use this guide if you are:

- A researcher doing post graduate research at Bournemouth University.

This guide is intended to answer your questions about resources and tools for searching the literature for your theses

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Bournemouth University Library provides an extensive collection of print and online resources on many subjects in two locations: The Sir Michael Cobham Library at Talbot Campus and the Bournemouth House Library (BH) on the Lansdowne Campus.

## Searching for Information

The best place to start your search is through the library tab on [myBU](#). Here you can:

- Use **mySearch**, the library resources search engine, to search across all of our electronic resources and the library catalogue.
- Search resources not yet added to mySearch and find out about any password access required
- Find help on how to search for information by clicking on the Infoskills online tutorial.

## Subject Advice services

Subject Librarians are available to offer advice on information resources for assignments, dissertations or research.

If you need further help finding the information you require on this topic, please use one or more of the Library's Subject Advice services:

- Ask for help at the Subject Advice Point.
- If you need more advice, make an appointment to see your Subject Librarian or any other colleague in the support team. Staff at any of the information points will help you to arrange this
- When staff are not available, send your enquiry to ASK, the online enquiry service, which you can find by going to the Library tab on [myBU](#) or the Library website. Your question will be answered from our database and if you require more help we will reply by e-mail with advice and, where possible, specific recommendations as to possible sources.

## Skills Audit

Before you begin you should consider what skills you have and what skills you need to improve. If you wish to discuss this you should contact your [Subject Librarian](#). In preparation you might like to try the [Information Research Skills Questionnaire](#) or the Libraries [InfoSkills](#) package.

## Searching – a model

The following is a model of the search process. As with all models it is only a guide. Searching should be viewed as an iterative process, in which you revisit searches to refine the scope and extend the range of your search. If some of the terms in the model are not familiar to you – see the section on Defining Terms below.

### Use a range of sources to define the scope of your research

#### Aim

- identify base theories;
- identify key writers and theorists;
- define the extent of your research topic;
- refine your research question;
- list appropriate keywords.

#### Resources

Many resources will contribute to this process; however, resources that provide an overview, 'the helicopter view', are most useful.

- Encyclopaedias and Dictionaries
- Scholarly Handbooks
- some Textbooks

#### Finding Tools

To find out which resources to use you should consult:

- Bournemouth Universities Subject Advice Guides;
- Published guides to the literature.
- Online catalogues.

### Search the book literature to review established research

#### Aim

Acquire a sound knowledge of theories underpinning your conceptual framework;

- identify key publications;
- understand the broader research context;
- locate critical commentaries.

# Guide to Reviewing the Literature in the Social Sciences and the Humanities

## Researcher Guide

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### Resources

Broadly the book literature has a number of forms of publication. Most useful at this stage are:

- Scholarly Handbooks
- Scholarly Readers;
- Review Publications;
- Books and Monographs.

### Finding Tools

To find out which resources to use you should consult:

- Bournemouth Universities Subject Advice Guides;
- General catalogues;
- Bibliographies.

### Search the journal /conference literature to review current research

#### Aim

- search the journal literature;
- review current ideas;
- locate recent research;
- locate current reviews and critical discussion.
- scan current issues of relevant journals.

### Resources

Sources at this stage are those that publish current ideas and research:

- Peer Reviewed Journals;
- Published Conference Proceedings and Papers.

### Finding Tools

Current literature can be found using electronic databases, which in most cases will link you directly to the full text of articles and conference papers.

- Journal Databases
- Citation Indexes;
- Theses and Dissertations;
- Alerting and Current Awareness Services [ACAS].

### Defining Terms

This section lists the forms of publication referred to in the model above. They are listed in the order of currency. That is, the most current sources of information are listed first and the least current sources listed last. These represent stages in what is called the Publication Cycle, the places in which ideas appear in print from first presentation in a conference paper to final assimilation into the established literature of a given subject through inclusion in a scholarly encyclopaedia. The model (see Searching – a model above) suggests that you search these in reverse order of currency, reviewing established research first.

### Conference Papers and Proceedings

Conferences provide a forum for practitioners and academics to meet and discuss new ideas around a particular topic or theme. Conference papers are unusually the first public presentation of ideas to colleagues and peers. They are the most current form of publication although there can be a delay while papers are collated and edited for publication. In addition they

represent ideas in 'raw' form which may go through a process of change and refinement before being submitted for publication in Peer Reviewed Journals.

### Peer Reviewed Journals

Peer Reviewed Journals, also called Scholarly or Academic journals are defined by the mechanism for evaluating contributions, a review by academic colleagues or peers. Peer review tries to ensure that published work is of excellent quality, that it is genuine and that it conforms to the accepted paradigms of the subject or discipline. For most subjects in the social sciences and the humanities Peer Reviewed journal articles are a **key resource** for accessing published research.

Peer Reviewed titles or groups of titles define research in any academic area and are underpinned by networks of scholars who serve on editorial boards, as reviewers or who are members of scholarly organisations publishing a particular title. Checking new issues of peer reviewed journals regularly, perhaps assisted by Alerting and Current Awareness Services [ACAS] like **ZETOC** (see below) should be part of your strategy to keep up with current research in your area.

Peer Reviewed Journals may have different standing in the communities of scholars they address. While not an exact measure, the **ISI Citation Reports** [available via the Library Website] gives an estimate based on citation analysis of the impact or significance of titles.

### Scholarly Handbooks

Scholarly handbooks provide a broad framework to orientate researchers. Chapters are written by leading scholars whose purpose is both to integrate and summarise past research, and advance the theoretical and methodological directions within their discipline. Although the material in handbooks may sometimes be rather dated, they represent an excellent starting point for your information research.

### Textbooks

Textbooks aim to simplify and structure knowledge in a particular discipline to make it accessible to undergraduate students new to a subject. Although not appropriate to support advanced research, they do provide an overview and signposts to key theories, writers and seminal works in the field. In addition textbooks define the current limits of generally accepted knowledge in any area and are a useful indicator of the scope of a subject.

### Scholarly Readers

Scholarly Readers are edited collections of journal articles and occasionally chapters from books and other forms of publication. Editors are established academics in their field, whose aim is to bring together seminal writing published over a period of time to illustrate a theme or theoretical development in the subject.

## Review Publications

Reviews summarise recent research activities. Most are published annually. You are advised to try to locate a review article at an early stage of your literature search. They present state-of-the-art overviews and analysis and they should report upon and evaluate current research initiatives. They are published with the intention of clarifying existing and alternative paradigms; refining theoretical and research taxonomies; and encouraging methodological consideration of the whole field of communication.

## Books and Monographs

Books and monographs represent a category of academic texts written by scholars that address specific topics or advance particular perspectives or theories. Reviewing the broader book literature is an essential part of a strategy to review the literature. Although Bournemouth University collections are extensive in areas of the curriculum taught in the University, they are not comprehensive. Using general catalogues, such as *COPAC*, gives a broader view of the book literature in your area of research.

## Encyclopaedias and Dictionaries

Scholarly encyclopaedias and dictionaries give a 'helicopter' view of any subject. They can be a useful starting point and a source of reference and information for topics or areas which are unfamiliar to you. Individual encyclopaedias and dictionaries are listed in the Subject Guides written by Subject Librarians.

## Finding Tools: Subject Guides

Written by Subject Librarians at Bournemouth University, these guides identify the main resources for each subject.

## Finding Tools: General Catalogues

Comprehensive catalogues of books, which should identify books on your subject. Books which are not available in Bournemouth University can be obtained via Inter-Library Loan (see section on Inter Library Loan below).

Bournemouth University Library Catalogue	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab
COPAC [British Library & Research Libraries]	<a href="http://www.copac.ac.uk">www.copac.ac.uk</a>
Library of Congress [USA]	<a href="http://catalog.loc.gov/">http://catalog.loc.gov/</a>
WorldCat	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab

## Finding Tools: Bibliographies

Bibliographies in scholarly writing are a valuable pointer to relevant literature used to inform published research. Following up references, perhaps using Inter-Library Loan to obtain material not available in Bournemouth University Library is a good tactic. General bibliographies also exist that address the literature across disciplines, the most notable example is the *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences* [IBSS].

IBSS	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab
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## Finding Tools: ISI Citation Indexes

Comprehensive database of the scholarly journals, the ISI Citation databases can be search as either a general bibliographic database or using the specialised Citation Search.

Arts and Humanities Citation Index	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab
Science Citation Index	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab
Social Science Citation Index	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab

## Citation Searching

If you have identified a significant scholarly article which discusses the topic you are interested in, or which has provided a foundation for your thinking in this area, you can search for other articles that have cited this article using the Citation Indexes. This leads you to articles whose content closely matches the subject you are searching for and enables you to follow developments in the literature for the period following the publication of your original article. A separate guide that takes you through this process in detail is available on the Library Website.

## Finding Tools: Journals Databases

Databases of journal articles cover broad discipline areas, e.g. Management or Psychology and can be identified on the Library Website which lists [Databases by Subject](#) or from [Subject Guides](#). The majority of databases have links to the full text of articles and can be accessed off Campus using your ATHENS Personal Account

## Finding Tools: Conference Papers

ISI Proceedings	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab
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## Finding Tools: Dissertations and Theses

Dissertations and theses produced within the United Kingdom can be located using the **Index to Theses**. PhD Theses produced in the UK can be obtained via the Inter-Library loan system. Many are supplied in microform and can be read using **microform** reader printer facilities in the Talbot Campus Library and Learning Centre. Theses produced outside the UK can be located using **Dissertation Abstracts** (most recent two years only), the **WorldCat**, a general bibliographic database and **ABI Inform**, a business and management database.

ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Abstracts	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab
Index to Theses [ASLIB]	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab
WorldCat	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab

## Contact Details

### Bournemouth House Library

19 Christchurch Road, Bournemouth BH1 3LH UK  
Library renewals, information and subject advice:  
Tel: +44 (0) 1202 965959.

### The Sir Michael Cobham Library

Talbot Campus, Fern Barrow, Poole, BH12 5BB, UK  
Library renewals, information and subject advice:  
Tel: +44 (0) 1202 965959.

### Also at The Sir Michael Cobham Library:

Additional Learning Needs Service: Tel: +44 (0) 1202 965663  
Learning Support Reception Desk: Tel: +44 (0) 1202 965663  
Language Centre Advice: Tel: +44 (0) 1202 965300  
IT Service Desk: Tel: +44 (0) 1202 965515

AS Information Line (24hr)

Tel: +44 (0) 1202 965959  
Press 0 for enquiries  
Press 5 for library renewals

## Tools: Alerting and Current Awareness Services [ACAS]

In the lifecycle of your research, the most intensive searches of the literature will occur at the beginning. However, as you progress through your research you need to keep up to date with the current literature as it is published. ACAS services are provided as part of most major databases the Library subscribes to. Broadly they involve setting up a search and saving it. The database software will run the search periodically and e-mail you the results.

The most comprehensive Table of Contents [TOC] service, one that e-mails you the table of contents of journals you are interested in as they are published is **ZETOC**, from the British Library. You are advised to use **ZETOC**, which is ATHENS Authenticated to set up a table of contents alert for journals relevant to your research.

ZETOC	via <a href="#">myBU</a> Library tab
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## Tools: EndNote

[EndNote](#) is a Personal Bibliographic Software (PBS) package designed to manage bibliographic references to all kinds of information:

- printed sources; books, journal articles, conferences and reports.
- non-print materials; videos, CD's and tapes.
- electronic resources; web pages and e-mails.

*EndNote* and PBS packages have many advantages over general purpose database management packages. They enable you to:

- store and retrieve records using a sophisticated retrieval interface;
- input data manually, directly from the Internet or download from databases;
- work with Microsoft Word to cite references directly from *EndNote* databases into your word documents;
- choose from citation styles used by professional institutions and publishers to produce reference lists and bibliographies;
- seamlessly download into your personal *EndNote* database from many major bibliographic databases.

For any significant research project, such as theses, EndNote is an essential tool. The University has a site licence and so the software can be installed on your work computer at no cost to you (you will have to pay a discounted price to install it on your personal or home machine). More information about EndNote can be found on the Library Website.

## Tools: Inter Library Loan

Information on [Inter-Library Loan](#) can be found on the Library Website. In brief Inter-Library Loan allows you to request books, journals, conference papers and dissertation from the British Library. Once you have identified the publication you want and verified that it is not available in Bournemouth University Library items may be requested by completing a simple form, available from either The Sir Michael Cobham Library or Bournemouth House Library.

## Suggested Reading

### Guides to reviewing the literature

Daymon, C. & Holloway, I. 2002. Reviewing the literature and writing the research proposal IN DAYMON, C. & HOLLOWAY, I. (eds.) *Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications*. Routledge: London. pp 35-46.

Hart, C. 1998. Doing a literature review: releasing the social science research imagination. London: Sage.

### Guides to searching

Armstrong, C.J. & Large, A., 2001. Manual of online search strategies. Volume 3. *Humanities and social sciences*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. London: Gower.

Hart, C., 2001. Doing a literature search: a comprehensive guide for the Social Sciences. London: Sage. 025.063 HAR

Holland, M. 2002. Tools and techniques for locating, retrieving and storing electronic text. IN DAYMON, C. & HOLLOWAY, I. (eds.) *Qualitative research methods in public relations and marketing communications*. London: Routledge.

Rumsey, S., 2004. How to find information. Maidenhead: Open University.

Rubin, R.B., Rubin, A.M. & Piele, L.J., 2004. Communication research: strategies and sources. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

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