



How to Perform a Literature Search

Question: Why do this tutorial?

Answer: So you can confidently do a literature search and find relevant and up to date material for your academic studies.

What is a literature search?

“A systematic and thorough search of all types of published literature in order to identify as many items as possible that are relevant to a particular topic” Gash (1989).

Why do a literature search?

- To discover what information exists on a topic
- To form a starting point for your own work
- To give scholarly authority to your work which allows you to be taken seriously
- To make effective use of your time by focusing on appropriate resources
- To gain better marks
- To avoid duplication and prevent plagiarism.

Planning a search

First define your terms. You can use a selection of materials available in the Library to help, e.g. dictionaries, thesauruses

Search techniques

- Don't forget about different ways of spelling i.e. behavior or behaviour
- If you get too much or too little information use Boolean logic
- Use AND to narrow terms, use OR to broaden terms and NOT to eliminate terms.

Set limits to your search

- How far do you want to go back? e.g. information published in the last 3 years
- Decide how widespread your research will be
- Eliminate languages you don't understand.

Keep a record of your results and consult LEAP Online and library guides for help on referencing.

Search Strategy - Top Tip

Be flexible as your search progresses, you may have to rethink the scope and terms of your search.

Sources of Information

- Books
- Journals
- Internet
- Other Sources

Books

- Check the Library Catalogue or Discover@Bolton for relevant items
- Books are available in both printed and electronic format
- Bibliographies in books will direct to useful materials
- Use the Inter-Library Loan service to obtain books which would be useful but we don't have in stock
- Visit other university libraries using the SCONUL Access scheme.

Journals

- Journals contain the latest published information in topic areas by respected authors
- Journals are available in print and electronic format
- Journals can be found by search for individual titles, or by searching Discover@Bolton or specific subject databases
- Any journal articles not available in full text can be requested via the Inter-library Loan service
- For help with using journals or researching a topic see any of our help/video guides or contact the staff at the Library Help Desk.

The Internet

Increasingly information is available freely on the internet

- You should always check the validity and currency of the content before you use/cite it in a piece of work
- Consult some of the library help/video guides we produce on this topic for further help.

Other Sources

- Government Papers- usually freely available as PDF's online
- Newspapers- always check with your tutor whether this is appropriate
- Other libraries- you can consult (and sometimes borrow) items from other libraries via the SCONUL Access scheme

To summarise

- Be flexible
- Be systematic
- Record references as you go along
- Use all available resources
- And ask at the Help Desk if you require any further guidance.

Access LEAP Online at: www.bolton.ac.uk/leaponline