Sources of Information

In this chapter you will:

• Identify the three major types of information resources in society;
• Learn information is of a wide diversity and in various formats;
• Learn and understand the various related issues in identifying appropriate information resources for your academic research;
• Learn the two major classification systems adopted in grouping all materials items in an academic library;
• Learn and understand the criteria in information sourcing decisions.
I Introduction

When you work on your research or group project, you need information for investigation and analysis. At this point, have you ever stopped for a while wondering about the following questions? What kinds of information do you need for your research topic? What kinds of information sources are available for your searching? How do you identify the proper sources for your information searching? In order to find solutions to these queries, it is recommended that you should have a knowledge recognizing how information is produced and organized in a society. In other words, you need to know how knowledge is produced in a society.

Knowledge production is in fact a very complex and time consuming process. First you must have an idea in your mind, and eventually you make your decision to pursue it further. The idea will take time to research and develop—regardless of whether it leads to scientific experimentation or research in a library.

In addition to finding the time needed to do the research and produce new knowledge, a person must find the proper funding to pursue the research. Therefore researchers must often locate funding resources outside their place of employment, and substantial amount of time has to be spent in writing proposals for grants. Normally, researches are done by persons who work for government agencies, universities, large non-profit organizations, or large corporations.

II Information Resources

Generally, production of knowledge in a society is considered to be derived from the three major resources, namely: Government information, academic information and private sector information.

A Government Information

Government information provides a wealth of information for your searching and study. In Hong Kong, most of the knowledge produced by the HK SAR Government is either supported by, or funded by, government agencies (i.e., government departments) at all levels, academic institutions, or business research firms. Government officials need information about the Hong Kong society in order to make economic, social, and political policy decisions. Since the information and knowledge generated by the HK SAR Government is done with public tax dollars, Hong Kong citizens are able to access the information at little or no additional cost. This can be done through the government

1 Generally, scientific research costs more funding than social scientific and humanities research.
public library depository system (i.e. the Hong Kong Collection at the Hong Kong Central Library) or the government web sites.

The Hong Kong Collection is a comprehensive collection of Hong Kong related materials, including books, periodicals, government publications, audiovisual and multimedia materials, CD-ROM databases, maps and others. The collection has grown to over 70,000 items and is mainly maintained at the Hong Kong Central Library, the City Hall Public Library, the Kowloon Public Library, Shatin Public Library, Tsuen Wan Public Library and Tuen Mun Public Library. Among the six public libraries, the Collection at the Hong Kong Central Library is the largest, with historical documents and government publications, including a complete run of government gazettes since 1853, administrative and annual reports of the government since 1879, departmental reports, district board minutes and papers, statistical information and ad-hoc publications. Information stored in the Collection may be available in print format, microform format, or in electronic format. As a result, Hong Kong citizens are able to access much of this government information through the public libraries or related information at home via an Internet connection while browsing the government web sites.

You may take a look at the following Hong Kong Government web sites and see a wide variety of government information available to you.

**Hong Kong Government Information Resources:**

  Information about the Hong Kong SAR Government and links to other government departments & agencies, related organizations and tertiary institutions.
- Hong Kong SAR Government Information Centre (General Information) ([http://www.info.gov.hk/ef3.htm](http://www.info.gov.hk/ef3.htm))
  General information about Hong Kong, government notices, government publications, and government reports, etc.
- Census and Statistics Department ([政府統計處](http://www.info.gov.hk/censtatd/))
- Information Services Department ([政府新聞處](http://www.isd.gov.hk/index.htm))
- Information Technology Services Department ([資訊科技署](http://www.itsd.gov.hk/itsd/index.htm))
- Intellectual Property Department ([知識產權署](http://www.info.gov.hk/ipd/eng/index.htm))

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2 Hong Kong Public Libraries. *Special Collections Hong Kong Collection.*

[http://www.hkpl.gov.hk/07depository/7_hkcol.htm](http://www.hkpl.gov.hk/07depository/7_hkcol.htm)
B Academic Information

Research universities and colleges are the second major producers of information (i.e., knowledge) in a society. In US, large universities (e.g. UCLA, University of Wisconsin, University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Minnesota, etc.) and private research universities (e.g. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, etc.) have been conducting numerous researches in sciences, humanities, and social sciences; and a great deal of knowledge is generated from the findings. Similar situations occur in Hong Kong, whereas the tertiary institutions have been conducting researches exploring various issues relating to government policies and social context. The influence of football gambling to the Hong Kong society is one of the hottest topics in research recently. (The research and the knowledge produced are generally published in the form of books and scholarly journals.) It is true that some of the research results can directly address social problems; and that the results of research in the sciences and social sciences can directly benefit corporations and public institutions. However, much of the research results do not directly affect the public in general; rather, they may be used by other scholars to advance a specific field of study.

Faculty research is often driven by self-interest or by the field of study to which the faculty member belongs. Many ideas are never touched due to various reasons. Among which the common ones are the lack of funding for supporting the research, the difficulty of getting the research published, or the pursuing of such research would make harm on careers.

Another fact we wish to point out is that funding for research support varies with academic disciplines and academic importance within universities or colleges. Generally, disciplines that can directly apply their knowledge to practical applications tend to be better funded. Thus, disciplines like medicine, computer science, engineering and law, etc are likely to acquire more funding than other disciplines like philosophy, history, creative writing, etc. This real world research environment certainly imposes some effects on our research.

C Private Sector Information

The private sector is the third major producer of information and knowledge in a society. Generally, the private sector producers of information comprise commercial newspapers, magazine and book publishers, film and television industry, corporate laboratories, and business research firms. All commercial media organizations provide public access to information and knowledge with a fee. (Try to think about the various kinds of fees that would be imposed to the general public from these commercial media organizations?)

On the other hand, corporate laboratories and business research firms also carry out research and
Introduction to Information Literacy (Lecture Note)

publish results. Nevertheless, much of the research done and the findings are kept confidential and are not available to public access for various kinds of reasons (e.g., providing the company competitive advantage over its opponents; keeping the research secret for political and social reasons, etc.). Can you think of some examples in this issue?

Finally, we need to beware that much of the research takes place in an economic, political and social background, and that a research is done does not mean it will be published and accessible to the public.

To sum up, you should realize how information is organized by libraries and the information industry once knowledge is produced by the above three major resources. We will consider these issues in the subsequent sections.

III Information in Various Formats

Up to this point you should understand that government information, academic information, and private sector information are the three major resources of information in a society. Whatever resources you may use to retrieve information during your research process, you must understand that some kinds of tangible forms must be taken if people are to understand them. Generally, information can be accessible in three common formats, namely: printed materials, non-printed materials, and electronic forms.

A Printed Materials

Information in printed materials format includes books, periodicals, and government documents. Detailed discussion is as follows:

(i) What is a book?

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s English-Chinese Dictionary (Extended 4th edition) defines a book as “a number of printed or written sheets of paper bound together in a cover.” This definition obviously is very simple; and a book in fact is composed of a number of components that provide you lot of relevant information for your searching when working on your research.

There are various kinds of books and one may find difficulty when locating a particular book in a library. (You need to know about subject heading later.) Books are normally divided into two categories: literature and non-fiction. Literature comprises works of fiction as well as poetry and
Introduction to Information Literacy (Lecture Note)

memoir. A fiction book (e.g. legend, novel) contains material that may not be true and that all or part of its characters and scenes are made-up by the author to tell a story. Non-fiction books deal with factual information. (What are the examples of non-fiction books?) (Examples: all reference books, history, literary criticism, and science books)

Organizational structure of a typical book

- **Title Page**
  This is located at the front of the book. It consists of the official title of the book, the author or editor’s name, the publisher’s name and the place of publication.

- **Verso Page**
  This is located on the back of the Title Page. It consists of more detailed information about the publisher, copyright information, cataloging-in-publication information (i.e., the information that libraries will use to catalog a book) and the ISBN (International Standard Book Number). The ISBN is a unique number assigned to every book and is very helpful when ordering a book or searching the book in a library catalog.

- **Table of Contents**
  This provides you a quick introduction to the major sections and topics covered in the book.

- **Foreword (optional), Preface and Acknowledgment Pages**
  Foreword—this optional page provides introductory remarks to a book, and in particular, this is written by someone who is not the author of the book.

  Preface—this page allows the author to include any explanatory remarks, and additional information about the book or about the writing of the book.

  Acknowledgments—this page provides the author to acknowledge those who have assisted him/her in writing and preparing the book for publication. Note that some author likes to include the Acknowledgments as part of the Preface.

- **Introduction**
  This provides summarized information of the material covered in the book. You can get a clear idea of the content of the book as well as the author’s point of view and/or bias when scanning the Preface and the Introduction of a book. Note that Prefaces and Introductions are generally located in non-fiction books.

- **Appendices**
  These are the sections located at the end of the book to provide the reader additional information about particular features used in the book. The appendices may include listing of acronyms, abbreviations, illustrations, and other special features not included in the text.

- **Notes and Bibliographies**
  These are generally located in non-fiction books. Notes are created when the author wishes to provide supplementary information about a specific topic in his text, or the original source of
information from which he or she got an initiative or the idea. Notes are classified into two major types: namely, footnotes (the notes located at the bottom of the page), and endnotes (the notes located either at the end of a chapter or at the end of the book).

Bibliographies are placed at the end of the book with objective to provide a summary list of other resources that the author has used in writing the book, or which the author expects that might be of interest to the reader. Bibliographies definitely provide a best resource when you need to locate additional information about a particular topic in your academic research.

• Index
This is commonly found in non-fiction books and is located at the back of the book. The index provides a valuable tool in highlighting information about the book and what the author has included or omitted. All topics within an index are in alphabetical sequence which provides the reader quick access to the desired information. A good index is normally cross-referenced, providing the reader the flexibility to move from one topic to another related topic with ease. A cross-referenced index is a helpful instrument to assist you to locate the main ideas and the related concepts contained in the book. You should consult the index when looking for comprehensive information for your selected topic.

(ii) What is a periodical?

A periodical refers to material that is published at regular intervals, e.g. weekly, or monthly. Common examples of periodicals include popular magazines (or general interest magazines), professional and trade magazines, scholarly journals, newsletters, newspapers and zines.

Popular magazines

Popular magazines refer to the periodicals that are of a general, or non-specialist nature. They are published on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis and are geared towards the general public. The articles, with a journalist writing style, are usually shorter and cover a wide variety of topics. Research and current issues are generally summarized. The author of the article is a journalist, and may not be listed within the article. Other features that deserve your notice are that articles within popular magazines are normally edited or reviewed by one or several persons within the magazine company, and that only a few or no references or notes are included. Furthermore, popular magazines have lustrous appearance, containing many photographs and advertisements. Because of all these features, popular magazines are probably not the good sources to use in academic research. Periodicals like People, Time, Newsweek, Sports Illustrated, Rolling Stone, and Car and Driver are examples of popular magazines. On the other hand, there exist certain magazines like Natural History, Scientific America, etc. may be considered as good sources of information for your academic paper. These kinds of magazines, though being classified as popular magazines, generally deal with
topics in significant depth and are written towards readers who, though not experts, are knowledgeable about the subject matters presented. (The periodical is indexed in a general magazine index such as the Reader’s Guide to Periodical Literature.)

**Professional and Trade Magazines**

These are the magazines that present information about a profession or a particular industry. Computer World and Advertising Age are examples of trade magazines, while Executives is example of professional magazine.

**Scholarly journals**

Scholarly journals refer to periodicals that are of a specialist in a particular discipline, and are written primarily for other scholars, researchers and experts in an academic or professional community. Scholarly journals contain the results of original research and experiment, and generally consist of long, in-depth articles, written in academic or technical writing style, covering report research, case studies, criticism, and containing many notes and a lengthy bibliography. Authors of the articles are experts in their fields of study, and their credentials are included within the articles. Other features that deserve your notice are that scholarly journals are generally sponsored by an academic or professional organization; all articles submitted to the journal will be reviewed by an editorial board of esteemed scholars. Furthermore, scholarly journals may have a serious, moderate look in few bright colors, containing less photographs or advertisements. Scholarly journals are usually published bi-monthly, quarterly (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall), semi-annually, or annually. With all these features in mind, scholarly journals are the good sources to use to locate articles in academic research.

**Question:** How do you recognize a periodical as a scholarly journal?

(How do you recognize a periodical as a scholarly journal? Wording like “Journal”, “Transactions”, “Proceedings”, or “Quarterly” may appear in the title.) (The periodical is indexed in a subject specific index such as the Humanities Index, or the Social Sciences Index.)

At Lingnan, the University Library has maintained a serial collection for all Lingnan staff and students. The Library has over 18,000 electronic periodicals and 4,000 printed periodicals. For your interest, you are recommended to click the URL: [http://www.library.ln.edu.hk/libinfo/ref_c.htm](http://www.library.ln.edu.hk/libinfo/ref_c.htm) to access the Serial Collection at Lingnan Library, and then the URL: [http://www.library.ln.edu.hk/libinfo/ser_deptlist.htm](http://www.library.ln.edu.hk/libinfo/ser_deptlist.htm) for the lists of library-subscribed printed periodicals by departments. Meanwhile, a list of electronic full-text titles is available at: [http://www.library.ln.edu.hk/ejournals/](http://www.library.ln.edu.hk/ejournals/). Try on these web sites for your browsing.
Introduction to Information Literacy (Lecture Note)

Newsletters

These are the periodicals produced by a variety of groups with the objective of informing readers about the activities of the group concerned. For example, the Lingnan University Bulletin is an example of newsletter which is mainly for circulation within the Lingnan community.

Newspapers

Newspapers come in many forms and are business in nature; they are designed to attract a broad segment of the general public. Because of this, the articles are usually short and are written in an easy to understand style. The materials covered are focusing on current events, news, views or popular topics of the day. The articles, written by journalists but are not signed, are edited and reviewed by internal staff only. In conclusion, we may consider newspapers are generally good sources for secondary information though in certain cases newspapers may provide primary information like direct interview etc. Newspapers are usually published daily, weekly or monthly; and are published by commercial publishers.

Question: Do you think all materials extracted from newspapers are reliable?

Zines

Zines are self-published periodicals targeted towards a particular group of like-minded individuals. Most zines usually focus on a particular area and are not available in any conventional places like libraries and bookstores. The University library does not collect zines at all.

(iii) Government documents

As we stated at the very beginning in this chapter, government information is the first major resource of information and knowledge in a society. In Hong Kong, government agencies (e.g. Census and Statistics Department) at all levels have been collecting information about the society and perform research. As a result, various types of government publications are produced and sent to the Government Printing Office for printing; the general public is then able to access the documents at a number of government public library depository systems. For example, the Hong Kong Collection at the Hong Kong Central Library contains the largest depository system for all government documents. Generally, government documents include various types of government reports (e.g. administrative reports, annual reports, departmental reports, minutes, etc.); government gazettes; government yearbook; statistical information and ad-hoc publications and so forth. For your interest, click on the website at URL http://www.info.gov.hk/ef3low.htm to check up the various types of
government publications and reports. You will find lot of useful information from this government website. **In conclusion, government documents provide good sources for secondary information in your academic research; all government documents present factual information and make references available when you need to locate relevant information for your research topic.**

In addition to all these printed resources, there are other resources that provide good references information to support your academic research. Typical examples include indexes, bibliographies, encyclopedias, atlases, yearbooks, statistical resources, and so forth.

**Question:** What types of reference resources do you find in the University Library?

**B Non-printed Materials**

In addition to the printed materials, information is also produced in other formats, namely: audio-visual, multimedia and microforms.

(i) Audio-Visual (AV) and Multimedia

Today, much of the information created in society comes in both audio and visual, and in multimedia format. The Lingnan University Library is a good place for you to locate all these audio and video materials as well as other media sources. Examples of audio information include music on CDs as well as books on tapes. Video information includes VCR tapes of TV shows, movies, and documentaries, etc. Furthermore, other media resources available at the University Library include laser discs, multimedia packages, VCD, DVD, computer software, interactive videodiscs, and so forth. Multimedia packages refer to multimedia software in CD-ROMs, which normally consists of text, sound, animation, graphics, and video in the application.

(ii) Microform

Information is frequently placed in microform format for archival purposes. Microform offers a very stable and economic medium to store information for long periods of life. Microform is divided into two major categories: microfilm and microfiche.

**Microfilm**

Microfilm is a roll of transparent film (approximately 100 to 200 foot in length) to store microscopic images of document. A special device called microfilm reader is needed when reading the images in a microfilm.
Microfiche

Microfiche is a small sheet of transparent film, usually about 4 inches by 6 inches. A microfiche reader is needed when reading images in a microfiche.

For your interest, browse through the URL http://www.library.ln.edu.hk/libinfo/avmicro.htm to locate the various kinds of microform collection in our library. What do you find?

In conclusion, microform provides you a good source of information if you need to identify those historical documents for your research. Materials like back issues of newspapers, magazines, academic journals, company annual reports, genealogy records, newspaper clipping, etc. can be located in the microform collection.

C  Electronic Resources

Today, because of the popularity of the Internet and the WWW, electronic forms of information storage are becoming very popular. From the Internet, you can access various types of information from a variety of web sites. Also many libraries have subscribed to many electronic databases and reference tools. All these E-Resources provide you very useful tool to locate your required information for your research.

(i)  Types of Web Sites (Shelly, 2004)

You surely can find various types of web sites in the Internet. In general, web sites can be grouped into eight categories, but in practice, many web sites fall into more than one of these categories. Listed below is a brief discussion of the various web sites for your information.

- **Portal**—A portal is a web site that provides a range of Internet services from a single, handy location. From the portal you can find general information like news; sports; weather for your use. Furthermore, portal offers you some free services such as search engine; web publishing services; reference tools; shopping malls and auctions; e-mail and other forms of online communications.

- **News**—A news web site includes newsworthy material like stories and articles relating to current events and popular topics of the day. Many newspaper and magazine publishers sponsor specific web sites that provide summaries of their printed articles, including those not in the printed versions. Some television and radio stations also maintain news web sites.

- **Informational**—An informational web site contains factual information. Examples include government websites and organizations that provide specific information like public
transportation schedules and published research findings.

- **Business/Marketing**—These are the websites from business companies with information to promote and/or sell products or services.

- **Educational**—An educational web site that offers channels for formal and informal teaching and learning.

- **Entertainment**—These are the websites that offer various types of entertainments like music, videos, sports, games, chats, and so forth.

- **Advocacy**—These are the websites which purposes are to convince their readers some specific views or opinions of a particular group or association.

- **Personal**—A personal website for an individual or family.

The following are some common examples of portal for your browsing:

- Yahoo.com [http://www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)
- Google.com [http://www.google.com](http://www.google.com)
- Lycos.com [http://www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com)
- Alta Vista [http://www.altavista.com](http://www.altavista.com)
- America Online [http://www.aol.com](http://www.aol.com)
- HotBot [http://www.hotbot.com](http://www.hotbot.com)

The following are examples of some selected internet resources for Hong Kong news:

- (香港電台網上廣播站) [www.rthk.org.hk](http://www.rthk.org.hk)
- Ming Pao [www.mingpao.com](http://www.mingpao.com)
- Wen Wei Po (文匯報) [http://www.wenweipo.com/](http://www.wenweipo.com/)
- Ta Kung Pao (大公報) [http://www.takungpao.com/](http://www.takungpao.com/)
- South China Morning Post [http://www.scmp.com](http://www.scmp.com)

Now you have gone through the various kinds of information resources including the printed
materials and the web resources. However, not all printed materials and web resources from the Internet are reliable and provide accurate information; therefore, you need to know how to evaluate the web and the print resources critically such that you can get your required information. For detailed information please click to the website http://db.mctc.mnscu.edu/Library/tutorials/infolit/adaversion/lessons/evaluation.htm to learn the various criteria for evaluation.

IV Special Considerations in Identifying Appropriate Information Resources

Recognizing appropriate information sources for quality information is one of the very important processes in an academic research. Listed below are the related issues that deserve your careful thoughts when looking for proper information sources for your academic work.

A Primary and Secondary Information

During the process of identifying appropriate sources for relevant information for your academic paper or assignment, two important issues you need to consider. Do you require primary source of information or the first-hand information? Do you require secondary source of information or the second-hand information? Do you require both? These are the very important things you must know before spotting out your information sources.

In many cases, you need to use both primary and secondary information sources in your study (i.e. primary and secondary information). What are they? Primary sources of information refer to the sources that provide you the original and unedited information. Primary sources require you to interact with the sources and dig out information. On the other hand, secondary sources of information refer to those edited primary sources, second-hand versions. As soon as someone else writes an interpretation of an original source, we consider it as secondary.

If you need to know more about the various examples of primary and secondary information sources that are available to you, please go to the URL: http://www.graphic.org/resources.html for details.

In addition to differentiate between primary and secondary sources, you should note that knowledge can be broadly organized into three major disciplines (i.e. humanities, social sciences, and sciences), and that each major discipline is composed of relevant subject fields, each defining individual primary and secondary sources for your information searching. Therefore, before beginning your information searching, please note the following two suggestions. First, identify the disciplines or subject fields for your selected topic; second, identify if you require primary or secondary sources or
both for your information searching.

B Formal vs. Informal Information

Not all information collected is worth of trust (i.e., reliable). Information extracted through personal experience, observation, interviews, etc., is normally related to personal views or opinions and may have bias in certain extent. Such kind of information is considered informal, and must be used in caution. On the other hand, published information extracted from government; business research firms; academic and professional organizations; business corporations, etc. are considered as formal information. This includes government publications; government reports; government notices; historical documents; books; scholarly journals, statistical information from business research firms and corporations and so on. Formal information is normally sponsored and issued by academic and professional organizations such as reputable trade publisher, a university press, official government agencies, etc. As a result, information extracted from all these sources are reliable and can be considered as good sources for your information.

C Purpose and Audience of Different Information Sources

Two important things you need to consider in this issue. First, what are the purposes of the sources? Second, what are the target audiences of the sources?

(i) Purposes of the sources (Motives of the producer of the source)

Different information sources have different purposes, namely: expressing specific views or opinions for a particular group; making commercial business or offering promotion of certain products or services; building an argument for individual benefit; providing factual information (e.g. current news item); giving a factual report (e.g., a statistical report or a financial report), or communicating a person opinion. Also you need to identify if the information presented in an objective writing style or a subjective bias.

(ii) Target Audiences

Some sources are targeted for the general public audience; for example, popular journals are geared towards a broad population of the general public. Some sources are targeted for a group of specialist or scholars; for example, scholarly journals and professional periodicals are geared towards academic scholars or professionals. Some sources are targeted for a particular group of community; for example, University newsletters are geared towards staff and students within the Lingnan community.
D Free and Fee-based Information

The Internet provides a rich resource of information. Almost all of the information obtained from the Internet is free. For example, you can access general information such as local news; national news; weather; sports; auction and shopping malls, etc. from popular portals. You can access government information and notices from various governmental web sites; and even you can obtain specific information like financial data or statistical reports of business corporations. Furthermore, there are web sites that provide free application programs for your download. However, some web sites requires your subscription and fee if you want to access a particular type of information. (Question: Can you think of any example?) On the other hand, all library resources are not free. The University Library has purchased a wide variety of printed resources; reference tools, audio and video resources, multimedia packages, and has subscribed a variety of electronic databases for the Lingnan community.

V Information by Disciplines (Classification Systems) \(^3\)

The main purposes of classification systems in libraries are to provide a systematic way to organize and shelve books about the same subject matter together as well as helping people locate a specific item on the shelf. There are several different types of systems, and most academic libraries use more than one. The Library of Congress or LC system and the Dewey Decimal system are mainly used to classify many materials. SuDoc (Superintendent of Documents) numbers are often used to classify government documents. Regardless of which systems are being used, the code (i.e., the classification number) assigned to each item -- its unique identification number (found both in the catalog and on the item itself) -- is called a call number.

Library materials at Lingnan Library are grouped by language. They are mostly in Chinese and English but include some other languages. Each group is classified by a different classification scheme. The following two tables outline the 2 schemes (See Table 1 and Table 2). All English materials adopt the Dewey Decimal Classification system, while all Chinese materials adopt 中國圖書分類法. Under these two systems, all the world’s knowledge is divided into ten broad categories (see the class number of selected subjects in the following two tables). \(^4\) The first division of the Dewey Decimal system is referred to as the First Summary, which is then further broken down into

\(^3\) Information Literacy Tutorial [http://www.denison.edu/collaborations/ohio5/infolit/c2libnav/#class](http://www.denison.edu/collaborations/ohio5/infolit/c2libnav/#class)

\(^4\) Refer to the Lingnan web site for more information in Classification [http://www.library.ln.edu.hk/libinfo/classifi.html](http://www.library.ln.edu.hk/libinfo/classifi.html)
narrower subdivisions, referred to as the Second Summary. The division will continue further with each subdivision classifying the knowledge into more specific units.

Example

300 Social Sciences
   320 Political Science
   330 Economics
   340 Law
   370 Education

Under the Social Sciences category, you can locate individual subjects, e.g., political science, economics, law, and education and so forth. And then within each subject, further subdivisions are formed.

Table 1 English Materials are classified by the Dewey Decimal Classification:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>000</th>
<th>Generalities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Philosophy &amp; Related Disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>Pure Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600</td>
<td>Technology &amp; Applied Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900</td>
<td>Geography and History</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Chinese Materials are classified by 中國圖書分類法

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>000</th>
<th>總類</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>哲學類</td>
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<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>宗教類</td>
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<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>自然科學類</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>應用科學類</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>社會科學類</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
VI Criteria for Information Sourcing Decisions

When you write your academic paper you need to identify proper information sources for useful (i.e., quality) information. Quality information is very important in academic research since it definitely affects your findings as well as the outcomes of your research. Therefore, you need to learn the criteria to evaluate information in order to locate the proper information sources for your research. In other words, you need to examine and know how to evaluate information from various sources as according to the criteria as follows:

Criteria for evaluating quality of information

The following are the initial criteria that you need to take when evaluating quality of information in order to identify appropriate source for your information searching.

- Authority
  Can you clearly identify the author of the source? What are the author’s credentials and background? Question: How can you determine the author’s credentials or background?
- Reliability
  Can you determine the trustworthiness of the source? Who is in charge for issuing the source?
- Validity
  Will the source provide you primary information? Facts or original work? Will the source provide you secondary information? Can you tell how the author makes his or her arguments in the source? What is the purpose of the source? Is it intended for specialist or general audience?
- Objectivity
  Will the source provide you factual information or views or opinions? Is the author objective or prejudice?

For more information about Dewey system, click on the URL at http://www.denison.edu/collaborations/ohio5/infolit/c2libnav/dewey.html
Introduction to Information Literacy (Lecture Note)

- Quality
  Are the ideas or thoughts clearly presented? Is the information well organized and clearly presented? Is the style of writing clear and understandable? Is the information valid (i.e., trustworthy), well-researched, and provided with good documentation?

- Timeliness
  When was the material published? If the source is a web site, can you determine how often the web site is updated? Will the content provide you up-to-date information or historical information for your selected topic?

A list of suggested information sources for quality information

You know that information is available from many sources and in many formats. You can find information from books, journals, magazines, encyclopedias, dictionaries (including general language dictionaries and subject dictionaries), commercial newspapers, television, videos, library databases, websites, etc. However, the important thing is to locate appropriate information sources such that they can provide you useful (i.e., quality) information for your work. In general, the information sources selected must consist of the type of information that meets your need and specific requirements. The website http://tilt.lib.utsystem.edu/nf/module1/tilt.htm suggests you a listing of information sources that you can search for to acquire quality information for your research.

A brief summary extracted from the website is as follows:

- You use a book if you need to:
  i) Look for comprehensive information on a topic;
  ii) Extract summaries of research to support an argument;
  iii) Locate historical information

- You use a journal if you need to:
  i) Do scholarly research;
  ii) Explore what has been studied on your research topic;
  iii) Explore other relevant researches related to your topic from the bibliographies.

- You use a magazine if you need to:
  i) Locate information or opinions/views about a popular culture;
  ii) Locate the latest information about current news;
  iii) Locate the general articles for people who are not necessarily specialists about the topic

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5 Part of this information is extracted from the web site at URL: http://tilt.lib.utsystem.edu/nf/module1/tilt.htm
You use a newspaper if you need to:
  i) Locate current information about international, national and local events;
  ii) Locate editorials, commentaries, expert or popular opinions

You use a periodical index to help you when:
  i) Researching a topic in magazines, journals or newspapers;
  ii) You know a subject but not a specific article.

You use a library catalog if you need to:
  i) Identify the items that the library has on your selected topic;
  ii) Find the location of a specific item in the library.

Use an encyclopedia, handbook, and dictionary if you need to:
  i) Identify discipline-specific terminology that describes a given topic;
  ii) Search for background information on a selected topic;
  iii) Locate key ideas, important dates or notions;
  iv) Locate the meanings of words and their synonyms.

Use the Web if you need to:
  i) Link to other information sources provided by your library;
  ii) Locate current news and information;
  iii) Locate information about business companies, government, academic institutions, etc.
  iv) Locate both specialist and trendy opinions.

Up to this point, you should have a good understanding of the various types of information and sources available in our society. You can access abundant information from our University Library and the Web, therefore make full use of the resources to learn as much as you can in this course and in your subsequent study in other courses. I hope you enjoy this chapter take a break before continue the next chapter.