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3

Finding What is Already There – and Putting it to Use

How do I know whether or not I need to know it if I don't know what there is to know, so I know if I need to know it (with apologies to *Yes Minister*)

It seems only sensible to make good use of knowledge already available to us. We can do this either by assessing the findings reported in books, reports and journal articles or returning to the original data sets produced by previous research and re-examining them. To do this properly requires not just description, but a critical eye assessing its potential to the current research. This chapter will address:

- the importance and process of literature review
- the need for selectivity and a critical eye
- referencing and avoiding plagiarism
- electronic searches
- the use of secondary data sets.

Background

Just as John Donne wrote that 'No man is an island, entire of itself', so too no research stands alone. It is surrounded by other grains of sand, some of which may be little gems. Knowing what other research has been conducted may save us going down blind alleys, making mistakes or repeating work that has already been conducted by others. It may also give us the means to understand our own research better and

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provide insights we would never have arrived at on our own. The nature of the review may vary depending upon whether it is conducted for a dissertation or a work project, but the process of identifying what is available and establishing the contribution it can make to the planned research is common to both. If you are doing your research within a university setting it is almost certain that carrying out some review of the literature will be a requirement. However, there are better reasons for doing this exercise than compulsion.

1. To start with, as Thomas and Nelson (1990: 48) note, 'the purpose of the review is to demonstrate that your problem needs investigation and that you have considered the value of relevant past research in developing your hypotheses and methods'.
2. It should provide reassurance that the research challenge you have selected is appropriate, important and do-able.
3. Beyond that, by the time you submit your dissertation you should have a good knowledge of the main ideas people have been writing about in relation to your research topic. In short you should have become expert in your chosen field. A good literature review lends an air of authority – it helps to establish your credentials and demonstrate that you have some expertise, that you know what you are talking about (so even Dave might believe you).
4. Tracing how others have conducted their research should help in devising an appropriate approach and set of research instruments for your own work.
5. The material identified in your literature review should provide a route into your later analysis, using the categories, theories and speculation you have unearthed.

Some people do worry that becoming embedded in existing ways of understanding the world limits thought, preventing researchers from 'thinking outside the box'. However, the counter argument based on the stimulation of ideas is very strong, especially for those whose natural inclination is to 'argue' with what they read or make links between disparate ideas.

Formulating the initial research challenge is intimately bound up with the review process. From the germ of an idea you have to work to and fro, using the literature in an iterative process of refinement. As you know more about the literature you can be more precise in specifying your research problem, and the more precise you are in specifying your research problem the more focused and productive can be your literature search.

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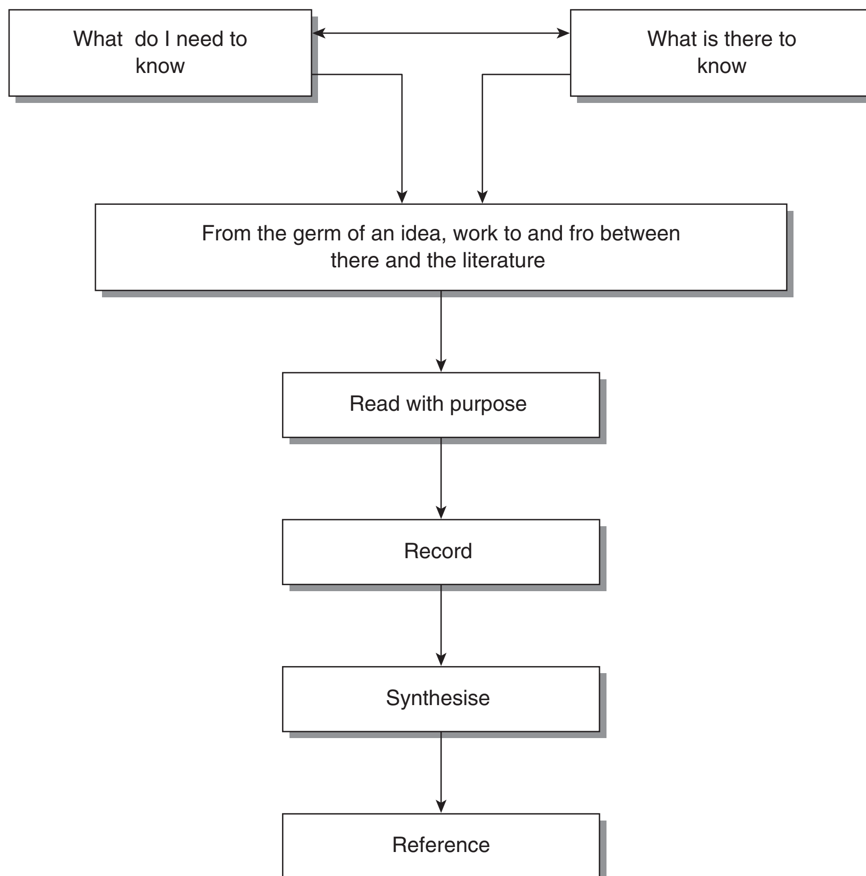

Figure 3.1 Making use of literature

Searching

A common complaint heard by dissertation tutors is that there is nothing written about a student's selected topic. You may not find anything specifically on 'the effectiveness of distributing free shuttlecocks as a way of encouraging single parents to become involved in the activities of the leisure centre'. But there will be plenty of material on differential participation patterns, barriers to participation, policies to encourage the participation of disadvantaged groups, establishing new markets, sports development, management theory, feminist theories of women's involvement in sport and a host of other perspectives. Think laterally. Your challenge is to sift, sort and evaluate.

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A library catalogue is a useful start but that is all – even for its own collection it does not cover articles in journals or chapters in edited collections, for example. If you are lucky enough to be in a university the information staff are probably equipped to provide assistance to get you started on your literature search. There are several abstracting services now available electronically that will allow you to search for material on the subjects you are interested in. The resultant listing comes with details of the source of the publication and a short summary of what the paper contains. Two of the most relevant to our areas of interest are *SportDiscus* and *leisuretourism.com*.

Although they may not contain abstracts there are also many general services in the form of either compendiums or catalogues. Popular examples of the former are *EBSCO* and *Cambridge Scientific Abstracts* which contains within it, for example, *Sociological Abstracts*. An example of the latter is *zetoc* a database that gives access to the British Library's electronic table of contents, and as such contains details of the content of a huge number of journals and conference proceedings (other national libraries have their equivalents – perhaps the most well known is the Library of Congress accessed via www.catalog.loc.gov).[1] As a catalogue, *zetoc* does not offer an abstracting service, but does offer the chance to link to the original item if it is available electronically. A more recent arrival is *Google Scholar* which is subscription free and helps to identify academic outputs that fit your specification.

So, there are different levels involved:

1. indexes and catalogues (listings)
2. abstracting services that provide short summaries of the material available
3. full-text journals online.

If you are not part of a unhiversity or major organisation, it may be difficult to use some of these. To gain access to most of them you will need an ATHENS[2] password as authentication, *and* (normally) for your institution or professional association to have paid the subscription to the index or abstracting service (and subsequently the journal). Ask your librarian or information officer what you will be able to get access to. Otherwise you will have to fall back on the web.

Even though e-technology makes it unnecessary it is still a good idea to rifle through the pages of the journals in leisure, sport and tourism so that you get a feel for the kind of material they contain and what is considered important at the time.

[1] Because of the confusion that can be caused by inappropriate punctuation in web addresses, angled brackets are sometimes used to delimit the address when it is presented in the text. Do not type these as part of the address when you come to use them.

[2] Primarily, but not exclusively used by further and higher education and the health sector in the UK as a system to 'authenticate' and authorise users for access to online services from around the world <www.athens.ac.uk>.

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Take a Look to Map the Territory

for example:

- *Leisure Studies*
- *Leisure Sciences*
- *Journal of Leisure Research*
- *Loisir et Societé (Leisure & Society)*
- *Managing Leisure*
- *Tourism Management*
- *Annals of Tourism Reserch*
- *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*
- *Sports Sociology Journal*
- *Journal of Sport Management*
- *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*
- *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*
- *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*
- *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*
- *Media, Culture & Society*

etc…

And don't forget the journals in your mainstream discipline, those in related areas like *Theory, Culture & Society* or the *Journal of the Market Research Society*, and those on research methods (yes there are some).

If your literature search identifies books or articles that are not available at your own library there are alternatives:

- The library you have access to is probably linked with others as part of a network.
- The system of Inter-Library Loans (in the UK) can normally get material that is published in the country (and much from abroad) from the National Lending Library.
- Many public organisations covering sport, tourism, the arts, countryside, waterways, forestry, etc. have their own library and information services that you may be able to sweet talk your way into.
- Increasing amounts of material are available electronically.

Most students and leisure professionals now are familiar with the idea of using the internet for a web-based search, but if this is not your forte, remember there will be plenty of people around who will be only too pleased to help – ask your family, friends and librarians. Of course, the internet brings its own problems. The first is the sheer volume of material, which can become a curse rather than a blessing. The second is the unknown quality of what is placed on the web. You should not believe everything you find there – you may be interested in *The Internet Detective*, which will help you assess quality. This is at www.vts.intute.ac.uk/detective.

Many sites contain useful links to other sites, but some are specifically constructed to act as 'gateways' to several other sites in that particular field of interest. Especially good for the social sciences is the one that hosts the internet detective: www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences.

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The Review Process

In light of what has been said, the bulk of your literature review has to be done early, but it should continue throughout the research. However, there is so much material 'out there' you could go on forever, so make a clear cut-off date that leaves plenty of time for writing.

Reading with purpose

Wonderful though it is, information and communications technology can potentially lead to severe problems of information overload. It is important to be selective and assess what is going to be useful. You have to learn to be a processor, not just a collector, of information.

Recording

Photocopying or downloading and putting it in your file is not enough – osmosis does not work here. You have to identify the major points and assess:

- how they relate to what others have said
- their significance for your research.

There is something about physically taking notes that helps to cement this in your brain. But then when you want to check back you have to find the original again… so perhaps there is something to be said for having the full text of *key* articles after all. Whether working with hard or electronic copy you can use different coloured highlighters and annotate the material you have selected. After taking notes, try writing a paragraph that you might later incorporate into your dissertation. This helps to secure the significance of what has just been read.

Every researcher has forgotten to do it at some time (and subsequently cursed themselves), but it really is important to record the full details of the source (see below).

Synthesising

You will have to leave out a lot of the things you have read and made notes on. This can be galling after all that hard work, but you should be aiming for a quality product so think 'relevance'. It is not enough merely to collect and describe. Simply listing material – Smith said this; Kelly said that; in 1987 a study found… – is inadequate for

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a dissertation. Researchers are often encouraged to 'be critical'. This does not mean finding fault with every piece of research in your review. It may involve identifying shortcomings, but more than that you need to ask yourself, 'What is the significance of this material, how does it fit with what others have said and how will it contribute to my research?'

Some of the key considerations for you to act on:

- Classify the research studies you have found so that you group like with like.
- Order the items to support the logical development of an argument (maybe drawing on a study more than once).
- Explore relationships between the 'facts' they present (what is being proposed?).
- Explain and evaluate these 'facts' and relationships assessing their credibility (how much faith you can put in them) and their potential contribution to the forthcoming research.
- Compare/contrast the results of different investigators.
- Identify the next step, which should indicate why your research is necessary in that particular form.

Referencing and (Avoiding) Plagiarism

In the academic world it is a cardinal sin to pass off other people's work as your own, so when you do make use of work that is not your own it is expected that you acknowledge where it has come from, whether or not it is a direct quote. Not making proper reference to your sources is known as 'plagiarism' and most institutions impose heavy penalties when this is detected. But referencing is not done just for these ethical/legalistic reasons. It serves other important purposes:

1. It allows the reader to follow-up the ideas being discussed by going back to the original.
2. It helps to demonstrate how you position your work within the theoretical and policy debates around leisure, sport and tourism.
3. If properly handled it should lend added weight to your argument by demonstrating support from elsewhere.

The social sciences have been following the lead taken by the natural and physical sciences in adopting the Harvard System as the normal way of referencing previously published material. Unfortunately, though, this gives a misleading impression because

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instead of a standard set of rules there is any number of variations on the theme (the version I normally use is not quite the same as the one the publishers of this book prefer). The basic principles are consistent, but styles vary. It is important though to be consistent in presenting standard units of information so people can track down the literature you have been using.

There are many guides to referencing, so I only intend to provide a summary here. Always check if your institution/organisation has its own guidelines. If it does, it makes sense to follow those.

In the text:

- author, date: page number (if substantive quote)
- if more than one reference, place in date order
- if there are more than two authors for the publication, name the first and then use et al. – all authors should be named in the references at the end
- short quote are incorporated into sentences, longer quotes (more than two lines) should be set out in a separate block, indented, single spaced.

Examples

Patton (1990) has suggested 14 possible strategies for sampling.

Different levels of involvement can be recognised (Gold, 1969):

… like the leisure boredom scale (Iso-Ahola and Weissinger, 1990; Wegner et al., 2002)

Wolcott (1995: 96) identifies the dilemma of the observer who faces 'the problem of what to look at and what to look for and the never-ending tension between taking a closer look at something versus taking a broader look at everything'.

… but there is also the problem of seeing the past 'through rose-tinted spectacles':

> For example I can distinctly remember saying to myself when I left school for the last time 'never forget how terrible these school years were'. But now I find it difficult to recapture that degree of negative feeling towards my schooldays. The content of my memories for school is more positive than I could have predicted twenty-four years ago. (Coleman, 1991: 124)

In the references:

- Book – author (date) title. place of publication: publisher.
- Journal article – author (date) 'title', *journal*, vol. (issue): page numbers.
- Chapter in a book – author (date) 'title', in editor (ed.), *book title*. place of publication, publisher, page numbers.

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Examples

Blackshaw, T. (2003) *Leisure Life: Myth, Masculinity and Modernity*. London: Routledge.

Long, J. and Wray, S. (2003) 'It Depends Who You Are: On Asking Difficult Questions in Leisure Research', *Loisir et Societé*, 26 (1): 169–82.

Whyte, W. F. (1982) 'Interviewing in Field Research', in R.G. Burgess (ed.), *Field Research: a Sourcebook and Field Manual*. London: Allen & Unwin. pp. 111–22.

All works cited in the text should appear in the references at the end. These are listed in alphabetical order by author. Publications by the same author are listed in date order (if more than one publication by an author in the same year, they are distinguished by a, b, etc. after the date – e.g. 2004a). All works included in the references should be cited in the text.

If you are doing a report to committee you might well be asked to use a different style because this referencing system 'can get in the way'. In such circumstances those who want to remain true to the principle that proper acknowledgement should be given commonly use a system of footnotes to provide the information.

If you get confused you can take a look in any of the recognised journals and follow the model used there. Alternatively, many (perhaps most) higher education institutions produce their own guides (you can find ours at www.leedsmet.ac.uk/lskills/open/sfl/content/harvard/intro/01.html. Guides like this are helpful for sorting out how to reference material that does not fit into these basic patterns, e.g. government publications and acts of parliament.

More and more information is found on the web where place of publication and publisher have no real significance, and it may be difficult to find when it was published or even who the author was. Again, the basic principle is to provide readers with the information they need to locate the material for themselves. This should include as much of the standard publication detail as possible plus the Uniform Resource Locator (URL). Control codes make some URLs run to several lines. In such circumstances it is normally considered sufficient to specify the website where the article can be located. Because the web is continually changing, you should also indicate when you last accessed the item. I was able to find quite a lot of detail on how to reference electronic material on the Flinders University website (accessed 08/08/04) at: www.lib.flinders.edu.au/resources/sub/healthsci/referencing/electronic.html.

There are now several software packages (e.g. Endnote, Procite and Papyrus) designed to help store references and make them available to the document you are writing in a range of formats.

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Secondary Data Sets

Behind what can be read about in journal articles, books and reports lie the original data sets. These may provide the necessary context for your own research and even offer direct comparisons. They may provide an opportunity to examine something that the original researchers either lacked the time, skills or interest to analyse. They may benefit from further analysis using alternative statistical techniques, or you may want to re-address the same issues from a different theoretical perspective.

People conventionally refer to data collected specifically for the research project as being primary data. However, sometimes use may be made of data originally collected for a different purpose/study, in which case it is referred to as being secondary data. Just as with recycling aluminium cans and plastic bottles, the extent to which researchers recycle data in this way fluctuates with fashion and most people do not bother. Key statistics may commonly be quoted, but revisiting the data sets to conduct further analysis is uncommon – it becomes more common the more people are aware of the cost of gathering primary data, or concern grows about imposing unnecessarily on the public. If the data already exist and we already know most of what there is to know about what, why and how, it is hardly fair to add to the public's concern that they are being over-researched (Chapter 14).

Stay alert though when considering the application of secondary data to a new research challenge:

1. *Dated?* – The data may just be too old to be useful because things are likely to have changed substantially since they were originally collected.
2. *Categories?* – You may be interested in tennis and the over 50s while the original survey included tennis in a general category of 'racket sports' and used age groups of 40–59 and 60+.
3. *Who?* – he General Household Survey, like may others, only includes people aged 16 and over, which may not help you much if your research interests lie with participation among those at school.
4. *Time period?* – For example some data sets may relate to participation in the past month and others to the past year.
5. *Geographical coverage?* – Check that national/federal, regional/state areas match your interests.

Quite often when we review these sorts of issues we conclude that the data are not ideal for our purposes. The question then is whether or not they 'will do' because the match is close enough.

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Some major surveys are conducted for a long time and then just run out of steam as policy interests change. For example, the UK Day Visits Survey used to be conducted in alternate years and provided an important source of leisure/tourism data, but there has not been one since 1998.

The sports world of course is full of statistics on performance that might sustain further analysis. For example, Grusky (1963) assessed the impact that changes in coaches and managers had on team performance. And many have followed since. So, as part of a research project, sports statistics might be used to establish just how big an advantage playing at home is, or what impact promotion/relegation has on attendance.

Social statistics are a form of knowledge, and like all knowledge they are created by a particular set of procedures – they are not just lying about waiting to be published. All forms of knowledge represent power. Some statistics are collected and others are not, different procedures of analysis can be deployed, and presentation can be very selective. Let me issue a reminder from Chapter 1.

FACTS DO NOT SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

Gathering together columns of numbers can be quite reassuring. But the numbers are meaningless without an understanding of how they have been collected and a theoretically informed interpretation of their significance. As Tomlinson (1989: 98) urged 'Without theory there is nothing; without concepts lists of facts are simply signposts to nowhere'.

Further Lines of Enquiry

I normally refer people struggling to appreciate what a literature review should look like to Judith Bell's book, *Doing Your Research Project* (3rd edition, 1999), because contained within the discussion is an example that gives a good idea of the style and purpose of a literature review in a small-scale research project.

Many of the data sets collected with public money in the UK are available on the internet at: www.data-archive.ac.uk. This need not be restricted to quantitative data – they also run *Qualidata*: www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata. The Public Records Office makes a huge volume of historical data available online at: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk.

ESDS International provides access to, and support for, a range of datasets with a European emphasis, but extends worldwide: www.esds.ac.uk/international. This offers access to other databases in North America and elsewhere, including the UN Common Database.

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The Sport England website includes *The Value of Sport* which contains information on studies that assess the contribution made by sport. It also provides details of how judgements are made about which studies to include on the basis of their methodological transparency and robustness: www.sportengland.org/about _vosm.

Books to which people often refer regarding secondary analysis are those by Hakim (1982) and Dale et al. (1988). A more recent offering is the four volume set by Bulmer et al. (2006).