Finding the best information for your studies

For RCS/IYO/MPP students

When trying to find the best information you must:

- **Not** just use Google and accept the results that you find

- **Not** use Wikipedia as your main source of information for your studies

- Make use of information that you can **trust**. That is information which is reliable and truthful.

> **If you are ever struggling to find what you need just ask the Learning Centre staff.**
>
> **They are happy to help!**

INTO ⟫ MANCHESTER

Make sure that you can trust the information that you have found!

Whether you are using a book, newspaper, magazine or website follow the clues to work out which information you can trust.

Be a detective (like Sherlock Holmes)!

Ask questions: *why? Who? When?*

WHY?

Why has this information been produced and published?

Think about the following questions when you find a new source:

- Is the information produced by an organisation who is trying to **sell** you something?

- Are they trying to get you to believe in a particular viewpoint (so the information is *biased*)? Do they have an **agenda**?

- Has the information been written as a **joke/hoax/to steal money**? *Anyone* can set up a website so be cautious. Some are entirely fiction, e.g. http://zapatopi.net/treeoctopus/

Think about the style that the information is written in:

- Is it written in **formal, academic language**? This is often a good sign.

- Is it emotive?

  ⇒ *Tabloid newspapers* often use **sensational language** (designed to attract your attention or guide your feelings). These are often poorly written and lack detail.

  ⇒ Examples of tabloids: *The Daily Mirror, The Daily Mail, The Sun, The Metro.*

  ⇒ Rather than tabloids, try to use *broadsheet newspapers.* Journalists here work within professional guidelines and are often more reliable and detailed.

  ⇒ Examples of broadsheets: *The Guardian, The Financial Times, The Independent (online),* and *The Times.*

WHO?

Who wrote the information? Do they have "authority"?

Ask yourself:

- **Who** is the writer? Do you trust them? Does the writer have good subject knowledge?

    ⇒ *E.g. are they a University professor, teacher, politician, or a business person writing in their subject area?*

    ⇒ If it's a book check the back of the book: is there any information about the writer?

    ⇒ Does the work have a **reading list/bibliography**? Does the writer have references to support their findings?

⇒ **Who** is the publisher?

    ⇒ Is the publisher well-known or respected? E.g. a University published like *Oxford University Press,* or a big publisher like *Macmillan, Hodder, Penguin*.

    ⇒ Are the author and publisher the same? This could be *vanity publishing* and is usually a sign the book isn't high quality.

- Has the information been **peer reviewed**?

    ⇒ This means that the work has been read and judged by other experts to be a valid piece of work.

    ⇒ It is essential at university-level that you are using peer reviewed articles.

Who? (continued)

When using websites as sources, look at the **URL** to see if it is a trustworthy source:

- **.ac** or **.edu** at the end of the URL shows that it is a website from an *educational institution.*

- **.gov** at the end of a URL shows that it is a website from a *governmental institution.*

- **.org** at the end of the URL shows that it is a website from a *not-for-profit organisation or charity.*

- **.co.** or **.com** or **.net** can be *anything*. It may be a good idea to google the website to see if it has been reported as fake.

When?

When was the book/website page written or published?

Check the **publication date** on books, and when website pages were last updated.

It is generally a good idea to use more **recent sources**, unless you are using a *classic book* on the subject which remains important, or if older books are required for the particular needs of your assignment.

Remember:

Why? Who? When?

For the best results, we recommend that you:

Use EBSCO Discovery

The databases available in **EBSCO Discovery** are ideal for finding good information. The books and articles you will find here are **written with authority** by *academics, specialists and experts*.

Use these databases by logging into **Open Athens** through the link on our website: **http://intolearningcentre.co.uk** and going to Online and Electronic Resources.

You can also get here through **Brightspace** by going to **Library Services** then **e-Library** in the menu.

Don't know your login or need other help? Ask the Learning Centre staff!

Also use the **guides and videos** available to you on our website and Brightspace to learn how to use EBSCO effectively.

Use High Quality Websites Only

When searching the web for academic articles you should *always* use **Google Scholar** (**http://scholar.google.co.uk/**) rather than Google or another search engine. This way, you know that you will find "scholarly"/academic literature.

You should also make use of *Open Access Gateways*. These contain web resources that have been quality checked by subject experts. The following are a good place to start:

- **CORE (Connecting Repositories)** Free access to millions of open access research papers. **https://core.ac.uk/search/**

- **Digital Communications Network** Free, full-text articles from universities and colleges worldwide. **http://network.bepress.com/**

- **Directory of Open Access Journals** Access to some useful peer reviewed journals. **https://www.doaj.org/**

- **JURN** Access to over 4000 free eJournals in the arts and humanities. **http://www.jurn.org/**

Learn How to Use a Library Properly

Searching in a Library

Most libraries today, including INTO Manchester, have a library catalogue available online. This lists the books that they have available to borrow.

INTO Manchester's Library Catalogue is found at: **https://intolearningcentre.co.uk** (also accessible through **Brightspace**).

Each book has a number (**Dewey or Subject number**) which tells you where it is in the library. Dewey numbers may also be called **class numbers** or **shelf marks**.

Checklist to help you find the book(s) you want:

- Make a note of the Dewey number/Shelf mark from the catalogue
- Check how many copies are available on the catalogue
- Is the book on loan already?
- Is the book an eBook?
  - ⇒ If it is an eBook, you will be able to read it online

If it is a physical book, you can bring your checklist and find the book yourself or ask our helpful staff to help you find it.

The Dewey Decimal System at a Glance

You will benefit from knowing the Dewey numbers of the subjects you are studying. We have listed the main ones below:

- **000** Computer Science, Information and General Works
- **100** Philosophy and Psychology
- **200** Religion
- **300** Social Science
  - ⇒ **320** Politics
  - ⇒ **330** Economics
- **400** Language
  - ⇒ **428.24** English as a Second Language
- **500** Science
  - ⇒ **510** Mathematics
  - ⇒ **530** Physics
  - ⇒ **540** Chemistry
  - ⇒ **570** Biology
- **600** Technology
  - ⇒ **650** Business
  - ⇒ **658** Management
- **700** Arts and Recreation
  - ⇒ **746.92** Textile Design
- **800** Literature
- **900** History and Geography

You can find **Help Videos** and **further guides** on how to use our databases on our website or via *Skills for Success* on **Brightspace**.

Any other questions? Just ask.