

Module 2

Developing Questions and Finding Information

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module the Student or community member will be able to:

1. Understand the different types of information sources
2. Understand how to determine the credibility of the information sources
3. Understand the difference between scholarly and non scholarly periodicals

Review of what research is.

- ❖ The word "**research**" is used to describe a number of similar and often overlapping activities involving a search for information.
- ❖ At its core, research is just asking a question or a series of questions about a topic that is important to you.

Choosing a Topic:

- ❖ What are you interested in?
- ❖ What topic do you want to know more about?
- ❖ Research requires a question for which no answer is currently available.

Using A Topic to Generate Questions

State your topic idea as a question.

Examples:

- Why are people with diabetes not taking a new medication even though it helps their illness?
- Are people who use wheelchairs able to move within the Kentucky state parks?
- What are the issues people who use wheelchairs need to think about when traveling?

Using A Topic to Generate Questions

- ❖ Advantages of asking a topic as a question (or series of related questions) includes:

1. Questions lead to answers. A *topic* area is hard to cover completely because it often too big; but a *question* is typically smaller and should lead to an answer.

- Example: Topic: Stroke rehabilitation?

Versus

- Question: What is the effectiveness of a treatment in improving balance in a person who has had a stroke.

Using A Topic to Generate Questions

2. Questions give you a way of evaluating the evidence. A clearly stated question helps you decide which information will be useful; it helps you to know when you have enough information to stop your research and develop an answer.
3. A clear question when answered can solve a problem or increase the knowledge base in a particular area. It also allows you to determine the gaps in the knowledge base.

Narrowing a Research Question

- ❖ A question that is too broad may lead to too much information. One strategy for narrowing the scope of a question would be to focus on one or two of these areas:
 - Place: (urban or rural, hospital setting, a county, a state, etc)
 - Population: (persons with diabetes, elderly, persons who had a stroke, children with a condition, etc).
 - Discipline: (Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Nursing, Speech therapy, Social work, Physicians, etc).
 - Time: (is something occurring in the present or happened in the past)

Finding Background Information

- ❖ Once you have identified the main topic and several keywords for your research, find one or more sources of background information to read.
- ❖ These sources will help you understand the broader context of your research and tell you in general terms what is known about your topic.
- ❖ They will give you an idea of how much and what kind of information is available on a given topic

Publication types

- ❖ **Primary Literature** is authored by the researchers, contains original research data, and is usually published in a **peer-reviewed** journal. The intended audience includes researchers and specialists, not the general public

What is Peer-Review: The research has been reviewed by “experts” in that field to make sure the research is of a quality worthy of being published

Publication types

- ❖ **Secondary Literature** consists of works that come from or refer to the primary literature.
 - Examples include review articles and reference works.
 - The intended audience consists of colleagues.
- ❖ **Tertiary Literature** consists of textbooks, encyclopedia articles, and guidebooks or handbooks.
 - The purpose is to provide an overview of key research findings and an introduction to principles and practices within the discipline.
 - The audience for this type of publication could be students.

Publication types

❖ **Popular Media** informs the general public about new research findings, prevention, and treatment.

- Popular media can include magazines (people, time etc), radio, newspapers, television, and web sites.
- The author doesn't need to be an expert in the area, and the aim is to summarize key ideas and concepts for the general public.

Evaluating Resources

Initial assessment of your information:

- ❖ Author: What are the author's credentials (educational background, past writing, experience) in this area? Have you seen the author's name cited in other sources or bibliographies? Respected authors are cited frequently by other scholars.
- ❖ Year of publication: Is the source current or out of date for your topic?
 - Many topic areas such as healthcare practices require current (evidence-based) information.

Evaluating Resources

Initial assessment of your information:

- ❖ Edition: Is this a first edition? Later editions indicate a source has been revised and updated. Multiple printings or editions may indicate that the work has become a standard source in the area and is reliable.
- ❖ Publisher: Is it a university press or a large reputable publisher?
 - Not all publishers are the same. Some are more reputable than others.

Credibility

Author's Credibility: Do you believe everything you read? Knowing more about an author can help you judge her or his credibility.

Publisher's Credibility: Similar to judging an author's credentials, knowing more about a publishing company can help you understand their potential biases.

Keep in mind that publishing standards vary for each publishing house.

Content Analysis

Intentions: Read the preface (book) or abstract (article) to determine the author's intentions. Scan the table of contents and the index to get a broad overview of the material covered.

Intended audience: What type of audience is the author addressing? Is this source too basic, too technical, too advanced, or just right for your needs?

Content Analysis

Objective: Does the information appear to be valid and well-researched, or is it questionable and unsupported by evidence?

- Is the author's point of view objective and impartial?
- Is the language free of words designed to provoke an emotional response by the reader?

Evaluating Web Resources

Purpose: There are web sites that pretend to be objective but have a hidden agenda and may be trying to persuade, promote, or sell something. Be careful and carefully examine the site.

- ❖ What is the purpose or motive for the site? (e.g., educational, commercial, entertainment, promotional)
- ❖ Is the site trying to sell you something?
- ❖ How easy is it to differentiate advertisement from content?

Evaluating Web Resources

Authority (similar to authors credibility):

- ❖ Is the author identifiable? Look for links that say "Who We Are," "About This Site" or something similar.
- ❖ Is there contact information for the author? (e.g., e-mail address, mailing address, phone number)
- ❖ What is the author's background? (e.g., experience, credentials, occupation, whether he or she has written other publications on the topic)
- ❖ Does the author cite his or her sources?
- ❖ What domain does the site belong to? (e.g., .edu, .gov, .com, .net, .org)?

Evaluating Web Resources

How current is the information?

- ❖ When was site last updated or revised?
 - ❖ If you want to find out when a webpage was last updated you can try Javascript. Type in **javascript:alert (document.lastModified)** in the address bar and hit **Enter**. A pop-up window will display the date and time when the page was last updated.
- ❖ How often is the site updated?
- ❖ Do the links on the site work?

Distinguishing scholarly from non-scholarly periodicals

Scholarly:

- ❖ Scholarly journals always cite their sources in the form of footnotes or bibliographies.
- ❖ Articles are written by a person in academics or someone who has done research in the field.
- ❖ The main purpose of a scholarly journal is to report on original research. (Example: Physical Therapy, or Science)

Distinguishing scholarly from non-scholarly periodicals

Practical news or general interest

- ❖ The main purpose of periodicals in this category is to provide general information to a broad audience.
- ❖ The language of these publications is geared to any educated audience. (Example: National Geographic)

Distinguishing scholarly from non-scholarly periodicals

Popular:

- ❖ The main purpose of popular periodicals is to entertain the reader, sell products.
- ❖ These publications rarely, if ever, cite sources. Information published in such journals is often second- or third-hand.
- ❖ Articles are usually very short, written in simple language, and designed to meet a minimal education level. (Example: People, Time)

Developing Questions and Finding Information

- ❖ Choose a topic
- ❖ Develop a specific question (not too broad)
- ❖ Find background information
- ❖ Evaluate your information resources (want the best, most reliable possible)
- ❖ You are now ready to start a research project!

Short Research Module Survey

Please follow the link below to a short survey that will give us feedback about the training module you just finished. Your answers are completely confidential and we will not contact you for any additional information. Your feedback is important to us and will allow us to modify this module as needed.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/viewform?formkey=dHhKODVLMzM5VE9vaEJGMGZ0ZzJXX1E6MQ>

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- Some materials adapted from internet material by the University of Washington and Cornell University.
 - With grateful appreciation to our community partners for all of their constructive input.
 - The project was partially funded by a grant from the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (1RC4MD005760-01)