1.2 Reading: finding suitable sources

Students often underestimate the importance of effective reading, but on any course it is vital to be able to locate the most relevant and suitable sources. This unit:

- examines the most appropriate text types for academic work
- explores ways of locating relevant material in the library
- explains the use of electronic resources

1 Academic texts

You need to read a variety of text types for your course, so it is important to identify suitable types and recognise their features. This will help you to assess their value.

You are studying Tourism Marketing. Read the text extracts 1–4 below and decide which are the most suitable for academic use, and why.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Suitability?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes, it summarises some relevant research, and includes citations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.1 To promote tourism and market destination, it is important to study the tourists’ attitude, behaviour and demand. The studies of Levitt (1986) and Kotler and Armstrong (1994) suggest that an understanding of consumer behaviour may help with the marketing planning process in tourism marketing. The research of consumer behaviour is the key to the underpinning of all marketing activity, which is carried out to develop, promote and sell tourism products (Swarbrooke and Horner, 1999; Asad, 2005). Therefore, the study of consumer behaviour has become necessary for the sake of tourism marketing.

1.2 The romance of travel has always fascinated me, and our recent trip to Thailand lived up to expectations. We flew from Dubai and after a comfortable flight arrived in Bangkok just as the sun was rising. Our stay in the city lasted only a couple of days before we set off for the hill country around Chang Mai, where we were planning to visit some of the indigenous tribes who live in this mountainous region. When we arrived the weather was rather disappointing, but after a day the heavy rain gave way to sparkling clear sunshine.

1.3 Holiday trips to the Antarctica have quadrupled in the past decade and last year more than 46,000 people visited the land mass and surrounding oceans. However, safety fears and concerns about the impact visitors are having on the delicate frozen landscape have soared and members of the Antarctic Treaty – an agreement between 28 nations, including the UK, on the use of the continent – are now meeting to discuss ways to regulate tourism.

British officials are seeking to establish a ‘strategic agreement for tourism’ around the South Pole. If successful, it will see treaty members introduce new measures to improve the safety of tourist trips, while also reducing the impact that visitors will have on the environment. The regulations could see limits on the number of ships and landings, restrictions on how close they come to shore, a ban on building tourist facilities and hotels on the continent, and rules on waste discharges from ships.
1.4 Equally, from a political perspective, the nature of state involvement in and policies for tourism is dependent on both the political-economic structures and the prevailing political ideology in the destination state, with comparisons typically made between market-led and centrally planned economies. For example, the Thatcher-Reagan-inspired neo-liberalism of the 1980s, and the subsequent focus on privatisation and the markets in many Western nations contrasted starkly with the then centrally planned tourism sectors in the former Eastern Europe (Buckley and Witt, 1990; Hall, 1991). At the same time, of course, it has also long been recognised that the political-economic relationship of one nation with another or with the wider international community (that is, the extent of political-economic dependency) may represent a significant influence on tourism development (Telfer, 2002). Thus, in short, tourism planning and development in the destination tends to reflect both the structures and political ideologies of the state and its international political-economic relations.

The main features of academic texts are listed in the table below. Find examples of each using the texts above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Formal vocabulary</td>
<td>the marketing planning process in tourism marketing ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the extent of political-economic dependency ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Use of references</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Impersonal style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Long, complex sentences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Types of text

- The table below lists the most common written sources used by students. Work with a partner to consider their likely advantages and disadvantages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text type</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Textbook</td>
<td>Written for students</td>
<td>May be too general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official report  (e.g. from government)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper or magazine article</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Using reading lists

Your teacher may give you a printed reading list, or it may be available online through the library website. The list will usually include textbooks, journal articles and websites. If the list is electronic there will be links to the library catalogue to let you check on the availability of the material. If the list is printed, you will have to use the library catalogue to find the texts. You do not have to read every word of a book because it is on the list. Your teacher will probably suggest which pages to read, and also tell you which parts are the most important. On reading lists you will find the following formats:
Books

Journal articles

Websites
www.well.ox.ac.uk/monaco/dyslexia.shtml

4 Using library catalogues

University and college libraries usually have online catalogues. These allow students to search for the materials they want in various ways. If the title and author’s name are known it is easy to check if the book is available, but if you are making a search for material on a specific topic you may have to vary the search terms. For instance, if you have been given an essay title:

‘Is there a practical limit on the height of tall buildings? Illustrate your answer with reference to some recent skyscrapers.’

you might try:

Skyscraper design
Skyscraper construction
Design of tall building
Construction of tall buildings

If you use a very specific phrase you will probably only find a few titles. ‘Skyscraper construction’, for example, only produced three items in one library database, but a more general term such as ‘skyscrapers’ found 57.

You have entered the term ‘skyscrapers’ in the library catalogue search engine, and these are the first eight results. In order to answer the essay title above, which would you select to borrow? Give your reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full details</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Ed/Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Holdings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Skyscraper: the politics and power of building New York city in the twentieth century / Benjamin Flowers.</td>
<td>c2009</td>
<td>Main library</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Skyscraper for the XXI century / edited by Carlo Aiello.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Science library</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Taipei 101 / Georges Binder [editor].</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Main library</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tall buildings: image of the skyscraper / Scott Johnson.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Fine Arts Library</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Skyscrapers: Fabulous Buildings that Reach for the Sky / Herbert Wright.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Main library</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Eco skyscrapers / Ken Yeang.</td>
<td>3rd Ed. 2007</td>
<td>Science library</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cost optimization of structures: fuzzy logic, genetic algorithms, and parallel computing / Hojat Adeli, Kamal C. Sarma.</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Science library</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Skyscrapers: a social history of the very tall building in America / by George H. Douglas.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Main library</td>
<td>Availability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Full details
If you click on this you will get more information about the book, including the number of pages and a summary of the contents. This may help you decide whether to borrow it.

Ed/year
If a book has had more than one edition it suggests that it is a successful title. The books are listed by the most recent first; always try to use the most up-to-date sources.
Location
Many large universities have more than one library. This tells you which one the book is kept in.

Holdings
If you click on availability it will tell you how many copies the library holds and if they are available to borrow or out on loan.

5 Using library websites to search electronic resources

E-journals and other electronic resources such as subject databases are becoming increasingly important. Their advantage is that they can be accessed by computer, saving the need to visit the library and find a text. Most library websites have a separate portal or gateway for searching electronic resources. This allows you to enter the name of a specific journal, or look for possible journals in your subject area by entering a term such as ‘international business law’. In this case, the database may offer the following titles:

European Business Law Review
European Business Organisation Law Review
International Trade and Business Law Review
Law and Business Review of the Americas

In each case, you can access a list of issues available, which will let you read a list of published articles. Most journals publish four issues per year. In the case of European Business Organisation Law Review, the list would include:

Dec 2009 Vol. 10 Issue 4
Sep 2009 Vol. 10 Issue 3
June 2009 Vol. 10 Issue 2
Mar 2009 Vol. 10 Issue 1

By clicking on any of these issues you can read a full list of articles. It is usually sufficient to read the abstract to find out if the article will be relevant to your work. Note that most journal websites contain a search engine to allow you to search all back issues by subject. They may also offer links to articles in other journals on the same topic.

The best way to become familiar with these methods is to practise. Library websites usually contain tutorials for new students, and librarians are always willing to give help and advice when needed.

- Select a specific topic from your subject area.
  (a) Use the library catalogue to search for relevant books. Write down the most useful titles.
  (b) Look for a few relevant journal articles, using the library portal. Write a reference for each article.
1 Reading methods

It is easy for students to underestimate the importance of reading skills. Especially for international students, reading academic texts in the quantity required for most courses is a demanding task. But students will not benefit from attending lectures and seminars unless the reading is done promptly, while clearly most writing tasks require extensive reading.

Moreover, the texts often contain new vocabulary and phrases, and may be written in a rather formal style. This means that distinct methods have to be adopted to cope with the volume of reading required, which is especially important when you are reading in another language. Clearly, you do not have time to read every word published on the topic you are studying. The chart below illustrates an approach to finding and dealing with texts.

- Complete the empty boxes in the chart with the following techniques:
  - Read intensively to make notes on key points
  - Scan text for information you need (e.g. names)
  - Survey text features (e.g. abstract, contents, index)

Choosing suitable texts

[Diagram with steps: Look at title and sub-title, Skim text for gist – is it relevant?, Read extensively when useful sections are found]

- Can you suggest any other reading skills to add to the chart above?
2 Titles, sub-titles and text features

Many books and articles have both a title and a sub-title:

The title is usually shorter; the sub-title often gives more information about the focus.

After finding a relevant text, it is worth checking the following text features before starting to read:

Author
Is the writer well-known in his/ her field? What else has he/ she published?

Publication date and edition
Do not use a first edition if there is a (revised) second edition available.

Abstract
See section below.

Contents
A list of the main chapters or sections. This should tell you what proportion of the text is devoted to the topic you are researching.

Introduction or preface
This is where the author often explains his/ her reasons for writing, and also how the text is organised.

References
This list shows all the sources used by the author and referred to in the text. It should give you some suggestions for further reading.

Bibliography
These are the sources the author has used but not specifically referred to.

Index
An alphabetical list of all the topics and names mentioned in a book. If, for example, you are looking for information about a person, the index will tell you if that person is mentioned, and how often.

3 Reading abstracts

They are normally found in peer-reviewed journal articles, where they act as a kind of summary to enable researchers to decide if it is worth reading the full article. As a student you will not normally have to write abstracts, but it is important to be able to read them effectively.

Study this example:

3.1 CITIZENSHIP NORMS AND THE EXPANSION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Russell J. Dalton
A growing chorus of scholars laments the decline of political participation in America, and the negative implications of this trend for American democracy. This article questions this position – arguing that previous studies misdiagnosed the sources of political change and the consequences of changing norms of citizenship for Americans’ political engagement. Citizenship norms are shifting from a pattern of duty-based citizenship to engaged citizenship. Using data from the 2005 ‘Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy’ survey of the Center for Democracy and Civil Society (CDACS) I describe these two faces of citizenship, and trace their impact on political participation. Rather than the erosion of participation, this norm shift is altering and expanding the patterns of political participation in America.

(Dalton, R.J. (2008) Political Studies 56 (1) 76–98)

Abstracts normally have a standard structure.

Underline the main components of the abstract above.

(a) Background position
(b) Aim and thesis of article
(c) Method of research
(d) Results of research
4 Fact and opinion

When reading, it is important to distinguish between facts:

Rice is grown in warm wet climates.

and opinions:

I like rice.

■ Decide if the following statements are facts, opinions or both.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fact</th>
<th>Opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Smoking can be dangerous to health.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Smoking is addictive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Smoking should be banned.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Smoking is dangerous so it should be banned.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If suggestions are made in academic writing (smoking should be banned) it is important that they are supported by true facts (smoking is dangerous).

■ Read the following sentences and decide if they are fact or opinion.

If they are fact, decide if they are true or false. If they are opinion, decide if you agree or disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fact or opinion?</th>
<th>Facts – true or false?</th>
<th>Opinions – agree or disagree?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Britain has the highest crime rate in the world.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>In Britain, hundreds of crimes are committed every day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Many criminals are never caught.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The police are inefficient.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The police should be abolished.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Assessing internet sources critically

You cannot afford to waste time on texts that are unreliable or out-of-date. If you are using material that is not on the reading list you must assess it critically to ensure that the material is trustworthy. Internet sources are plentiful and conveniently available, but you need to ask several questions about each site:

- Is this a reputable website, for example with .ac. (= academic) in the URL?
- Is the name of the author given, and is he/she well-known in the field?
- Is the language of the text in a suitable academic style?
- Are there any obvious errors in the text, e.g. spelling mistakes, which suggest a careless approach?

■ Compare these two internet texts on deforestation. Which is likely to be more reliable?

5.1 We are destroying the last of our vital natural resources, just as we are starting to wake up to how precious they are. Rainforest once covered 14 per cent of the land now it’s down to a mere 6 per cent. Scientists predict that the rest could disappear in less than 40 years. Thousands of acres are cut down each second with dire consequences for the countries involved and the planet as a whole. Scientists estimate that we lose 50,000 species every year, many species every second including 137 plant types (not even species but whole groups of plant species) and as these plants disappear before science can record them so does the chance to gain helpful knowledge and possible medicines.

5.2 The scale of human pressures on ecosystems everywhere has increased enormously in the last few decades. Since 1980 the global economy has tripled in size and the world population has increased by 30 per cent. Consumption of everything on the planet has risen – at a cost to our ecosystems. In 2001, The World Resources Institute estimated that the demand for rice, wheat, and corn is expected to grow by 40 per cent by 2020, increasing irrigation water demands by 50 per cent or more. They further reported that the demand for wood could double by the year 2050; unfortunately it is still the tropical forests that supply the bulk of the world’s demand for wood.
There are several aspects of (1) which should make the reader cautious: the style is very personal (we are . . .) and informal (it’s down to . . .) and there is a word used wrongly (‘loose’ instead of ‘lose’). No sources are provided. But possibly more disturbing is carelessness with facts. Is it really possible that thousands of acres of rainforest are being cut down every second? The writer also claims that many species are being lost every second, but if we take the figure of 50,000 per year it means one species is lost every 10 minutes. Clearly the writer is seeking to dramatise the subject, but it is quite unsuitable as an academic source.

In contrast, the second text is written in accurate, semi-formal language and includes a source. It seems more likely to be reliable.

### Practice

(a) Read the following texts and decide if you can trust the information. Give reasons for your decisions in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) You are writing an essay on expanding educational provision in developing countries, titled:

‘Improving literacy in sub-Saharan Africa.’

You find the following article in a recent magazine. Read it critically and decide whether you would use it in your work.

6.4 How can we get the world’s poorest children into school? This is a difficult question with no easy answer. In 1989 the UN adopted a set of goals called ‘Education for All’, but in many countries there has been little progress towards these aims. In Nigeria, for instance, the number of children not going to school has hardly changed since then. It is estimated that worldwide about 72m children never attend school, 45 per cent of whom are in sub-Saharan Africa. Even when schools and teachers are provided, there’s no guarantee that teaching is going on: World Bank research in India shows that a quarter of teachers don’t turn up on any day. Several proposals have been made to improve matters. A British academic, Professor Tooley, argues that low-cost private schools are more effective in delivering education to the poor since parental pressure maintains good standards. State schools could also relate pay to performance: research by Muralihradan and Sundaraman in India found that this improved students’ test performance far more significantly than spending the same money on teaching materials.
7 Critical thinking

Even when you feel that a text is reliable and that you can safely use it as a source, it is still important to adopt a critical attitude towards it. This approach is perhaps easiest to learn when reading, but is important for all other academic work (i.e. listening, discussing and writing). Critical thinking means not just passively accepting what you hear or read, but instead actively questioning and assessing it. As you read you should ask yourself the following questions:

(a) What are the key ideas in this?
(b) Does the argument of the writer develop logically, step by step?
(c) Are the examples given helpful? Would other examples be better?
(d) Does the author have any bias?
(e) Does the evidence presented seem reliable, in my experience and using common sense?
(f) Is this argument similar to anything else I have read?
(g) Do I agree with the writer’s views?

Read the following text (7.1), thinking critically about the sections in bold. Then answer questions 1–9.

7.1 The growth of the world wide web

In the history of civilisation there have been many significant developments, such as the invention of the wheel, money and the telephone, but the development of the internet is perhaps the most crucial of all. In the space of a few years the world wide web has linked buyers in New York to sellers in Mumbai and teachers in Berlin to students in Cairo, so that few people can imagine life without it.

It is estimated that over 70 per cent of North Americans, for instance, have internet access, and this figure is steadily increasing. Physical shops are under threat, as growing numbers shop online. In areas such as travel it is now impossible to buy tickets on certain airlines except on the internet. The web also links together millions of individual traders who sell to buyers through websites such as Ebay.

Beyond the commercial sphere, the internet is also critically important in the academic world. A huge range of journals and reports are now available electronically, meaning that researchers can access a vast amount of information through their computer screens, speeding up their work and allowing them to produce better quality research. In addition, email permits academics to make effortless contact with fellow-researchers all over the world, which also assists them to improve their output.

There is, of course, a darker side to this phenomenon, which is the use criminals have made of their ability to trade illegal or fraudulent products over the internet, with little control over their activities. But such behaviour is hugely compensated for by the benefits that have been obtained by both individuals and businesses. We are reaching a situation in which all kinds of information are freely available to everyone, which must lead to a happier, healthier and richer society.
1 ‘... such as the invention of the wheel, money and the telephone...’
   Are these really critical developments?

2 ‘... the development of the internet is perhaps the most crucial of all.’
   Is this true?

3 ‘... so that few people can imagine life without it.’
   Is this claim credible?

4 ‘It is estimated that over 70 per cent of North Americans, for instance, have internet access...’
   No source given. Does this figure seem likely?

5 ‘Physical shops are under threat, as growing numbers shop online.’
   Is the first part true, and if so, is it caused by online shopping?

6 ‘... speeding up their work and allowing them to produce better quality research.’
   If the first part is true, does the result logically follow?

7 ‘We are reaching a situation in which all kinds of information are freely available to everyone, which must lead to a happier, healthier and richer society.’
   Does the first part need any qualification?
   Is the conclusion justified?

8 Is the writer objective or biased?

9 Do I agree with this argument overall?

Critical thinking>

See Unit 2.1 Argument and discussion