

Chapter 3

Critically reviewing the literature

Reasons for reviewing the literature

- To conduct a 'preliminary' search of existing material
- To organise valuable ideas and findings
- To identify other research that may be in progress
- To generate research ideas
- To develop a critical perspective

The Critical Review (1)

Approaches used

Deductive -

Develops a conceptual framework from the literature which is then tested using the data

Inductive -

Explores the data to develop theories which are then tested against the literature

The Critical Review (2)

Key purposes

- To further refine research questions and objectives
- To discover recommendations for further research
- To avoid repeating work already undertaken
- To provide insights into strategies and techniques appropriate to your research objectives

Based on Gall *et al.* (2006)

Adopting a critical perspective (1)

Skills for effective reading

- Previewing
- Annotating
- Summarising
- Comparing and contrasting

Harvard College Library (2006)

Adopting a critical perspective (2)

The most important skills are

- The capacity to **evaluate** what you read
- The capacity to **relate** what you read to other information

Wallace and Wray (2006)

Adopting a critical perspective (3)

Questions to ask yourself

Why am I reading this?

What is the author trying to do in writing this?

How convincing is this?

What use can I make of this reading?

Adapted from Wallace and Wray (2006)

Content of the critical review

You will need to

- Include key academic theories
- Demonstrate current knowledge of the area
- Use clear referencing for the reader to find the original cited publications
- Acknowledge the research of others

Is your literature review critical?

Checklists Box 3.2 and Box 3.3

Complete the checklists to evaluate your literature review

Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Structure of the literature review

Three common structures

- A single chapter
- A series of chapters
- Throughout the report

The key to a critical literature review

- Demonstrate that you have read, understood and evaluated your material
- Link the different ideas to form a cohesive and coherent argument
- Make clear connections to your research objectives and the subsequent empirical material

Saunders *et al.* (2009)

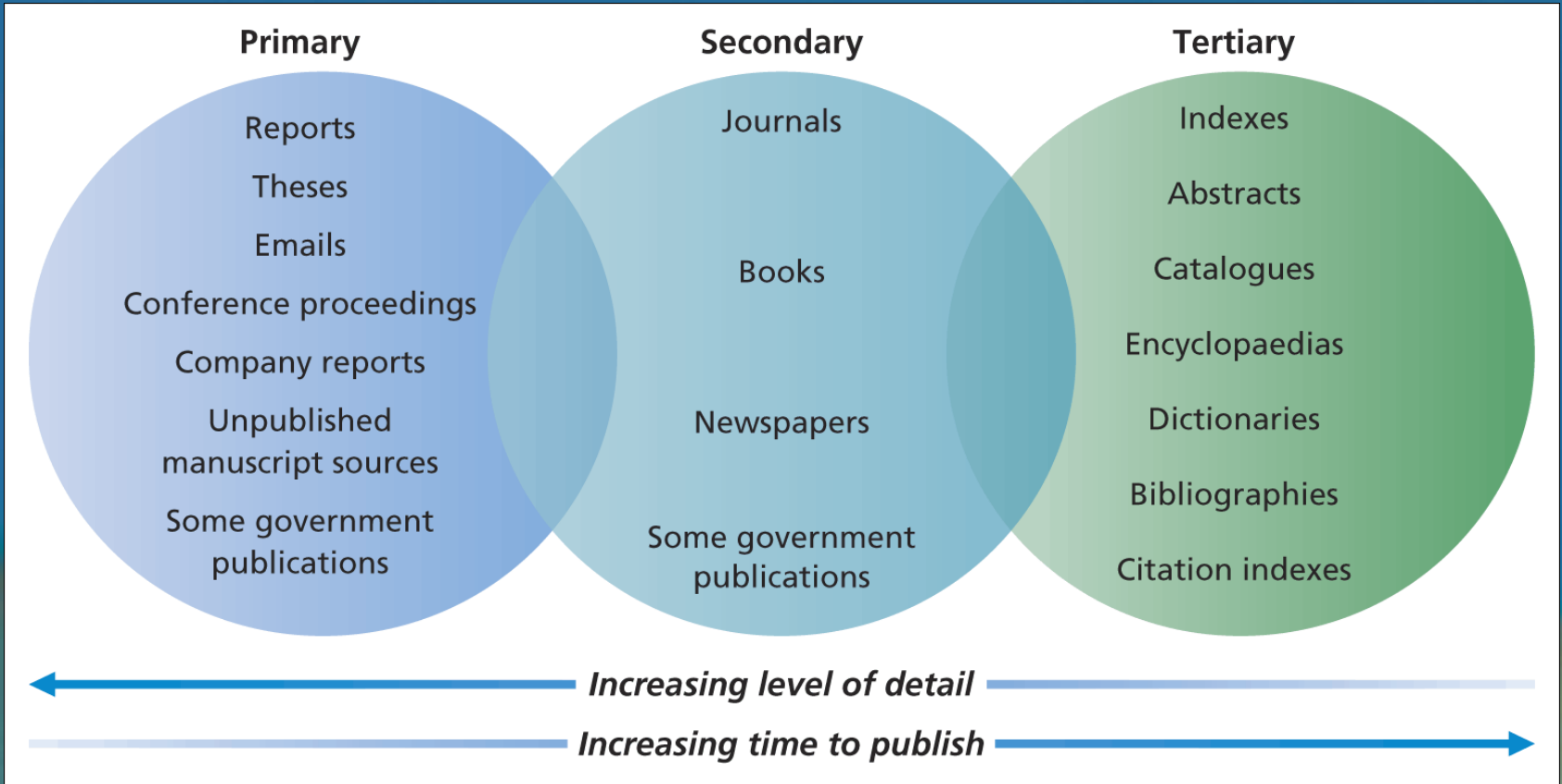
Categories of Literature Sources

- Primary (published and unpublished)
- Secondary
- Tertiary

Detailed in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Literature sources available

Literature sources available



Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Figure 3.2 Literature sources available

The literature search strategy (1)

Write down

- parameters of your search
- key words and search terms to be used
- databases and search engines to be used
- criteria for selection of relevant and useful studies

And

Discuss these with a tutor (if possible)

The literature search strategy (2)

- Define the research parameters
- Generate key words
- Discuss your research
- Brainstorm ideas
- Construct Relevance trees - use computer software

Conducting a literature search (1)

Approaches can include

- Searching tertiary literature sources
- Obtaining relevant literature
- Scanning and browsing secondary literature
- Searching using the Internet

Conducting a literature search (2)

Searching using tertiary literature

- Ensure key words match controlled index language
- Search appropriate printed and database sources
- Note precise details used – including search strings
- Note the FULL reference of each search found

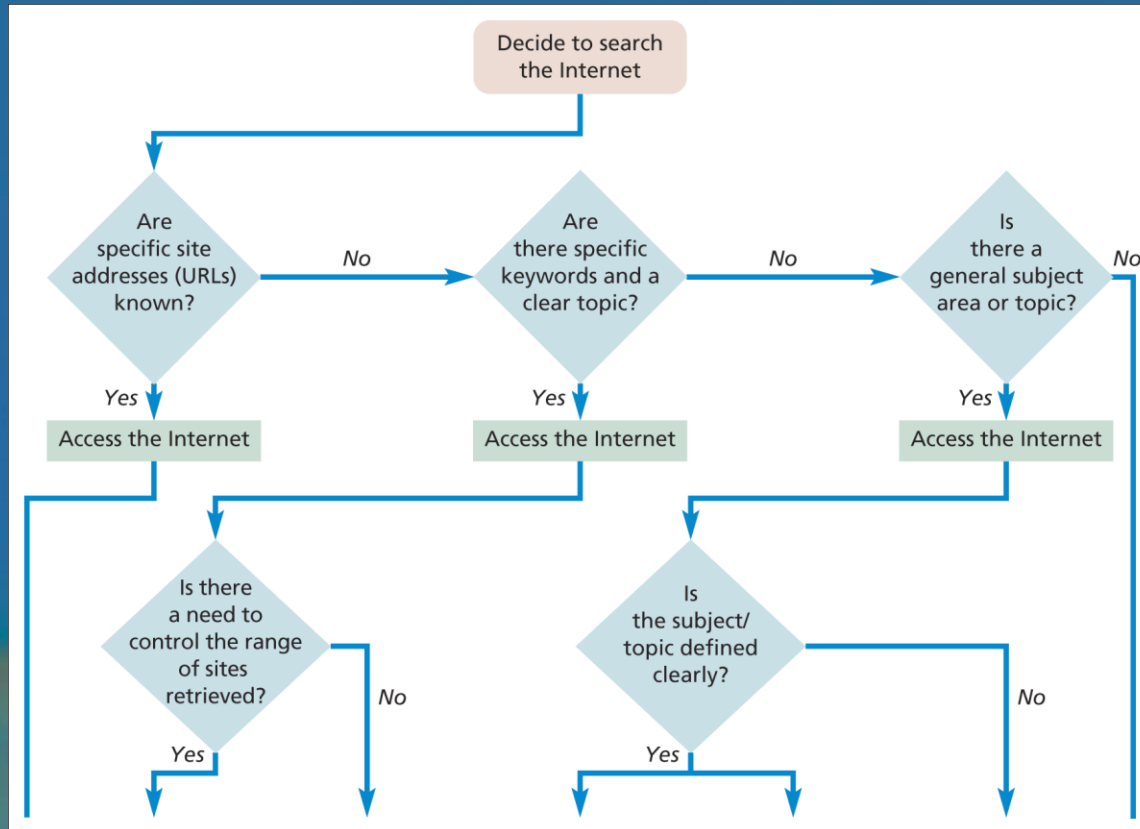
Conducting a literature search (3)

- Printed sources
- Databases – use of Boolean logic and free text searching (Table 3.3)
- Scanning and browsing
- Searching the Internet (Tables 3.4 and 3.5)

Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Conducting a literature search (4)

Searching the Internet

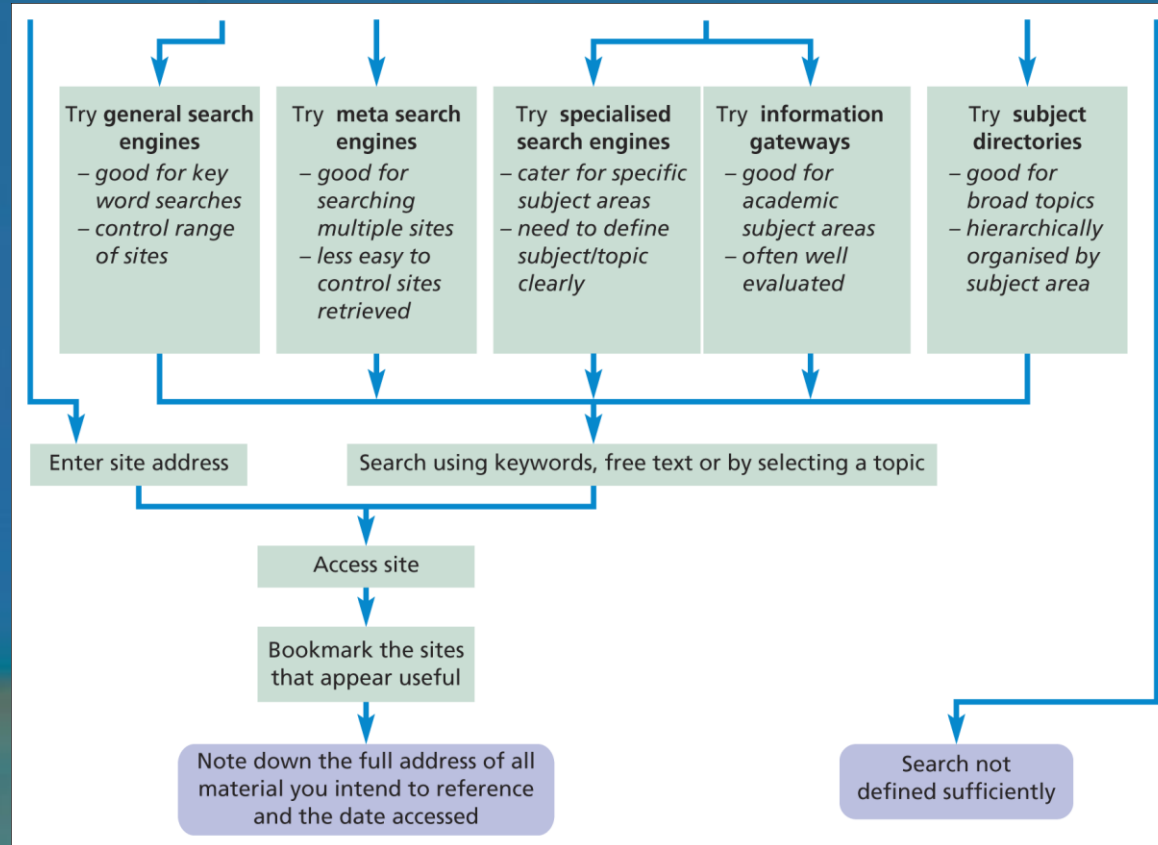


Saunders *et al.* (2003)

Figure 3.3 Searching the Internet

Conducting a literature search (5)

Searching the Internet



Saunders *et al.* (2003)

Figure 3.3 Searching the Internet (Continued)

Evaluating the literature

- Define the scope of your review
- Assess relevance and value
- Assess sufficiency

Recording the literature

Make notes for each item you read

Record –

- Biographic details
- Brief summary of content
- Supplementary information

Sharp *et al.* (2002)

Recording the literature

- Bibliographic details (Table 3.6)
- Brief summary
- Supplementary information (Table 3.7)

Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Plagiarism

Four common forms

- Stealing material from another source
- Submitting material written by another
- Copying material without quotation marks
- Paraphrasing material without documentation

Adapted from Park (2003), cited in Easterby-Smith *et al.* (2008)

Summary: Chapter 3

The critical literature review

- Sets the research in context
- Leads the reader into later sections of the report
- Begins at a general level and narrows to specific topics

Summary: Chapter 3

A literature search requires

- Three main categories of sources
- Clearly defined research questions and objectives
- Defined parameters
- Use of techniques – (brainstorming and relevance trees)