

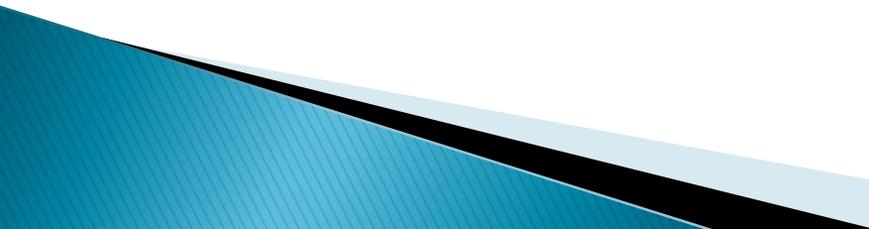
# INFORMATION SKILLS

A guide to using online resources for your research safely and effectively.

# WHAT DO YOU NEED?

- ▶ *What are you looking for?*
  - ▶ Before you get lost in a maze of information, define your search. Make sure you understand what your lecturer wants.
  - ▶ How much information do you need; is it for a short essay or a dissertation?
  - ▶ Do you want scholarly/popular/historical/current/local or international information?
  - ▶ Do you need primary source material, journal articles, books or a combination of some or all of the above?
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# What type of information?

- ▶ *Where to look will depend on what and how much information you need.*
  - ▶ **Length:** A short essay may just require information from the books and articles on your recommended reading list, or using books or magazines available in the library.
  - ▶ **Type of information:** Scholarly or popular? For academic and quality assessed material use peer reviewed journal articles and web sites from a recognised source. For information which may be reporting opinion rather than verified fact and need not be checked for accuracy use newspapers, magazines and web sites.
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# What type of information?

- ▶ **Currency:** For up to date information on what's happening now, use journal articles or the web. For more historical material (more than 3 years) use books and older issues of journals.
- ▶ **Local or international:** For Northern Irish/Irish material books don't forget the Central Reference and Linen Hall libraries in town. When checking journals or the web, remember that much of the material comes from America and may not be relevant to your topic. Specify UK/Ireland/Europe if you don't want American resources.
- ▶ **Direct source material:** Check the library Useful Links pages, or search the web for government and non governmental agencies working in your subject area. They are often a good source for the latest information, and published reports are usually available to download.

# HOW TO START

- ▶ Set some parameters to limit your search; if education, is it primary or secondary, boys or girls? How current does it need to be, 3, 5, 10 years? Is it local, UK or international?
  - ▶ Establish some keywords for your search, make sure you know what you're looking for.
  - ▶ Have a preliminary check to see that there is enough information available; books in the library, journal articles etc. If not you may want to change your topic now rather than later.
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# Sources

- ▶ You may want to use a combination of resources.
- ▶ **Books:** Print copies and [eBooks](#) may provide you with all the information you need. Their bibliographies are also useful sources for further reading.
- ▶ **Journals:** You can browse the journals in the library (keep an eye on the contents pages display in the foyer for new issues coming in. You can also search our [eJournals](#) for specific journal articles or browse journal titles.
- ▶ **Internet:** You can use the [Library Useful links](#) and [Online resources](#) pages or search the web with caution.

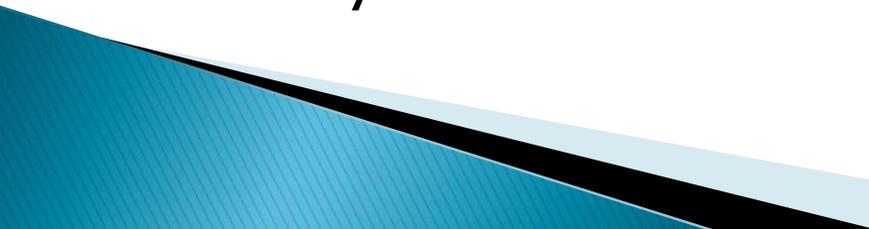
# COLLEGE RESOURCES

- ▶ It makes sense to see what we have first, you may find enough material on our shelves or in our online resources for your needs.
  - ▶ There are a number of [subject guides](#) on the library web pages to show you where to look for books, journals, and providing direct links to the most useful online resources for your subject.
  - ▶ If we haven't produced a guide for your subject yet ask at the Help Desk or go to our [Online Resources page](#) to look at the databases, and the [Useful Links pages](#) for Websites we recommend on your subject.
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# How to search the resource

- ▶ Each resource (OPAC, eBook or eJournal provider, database or website) will have different procedures for searching, but the same basic rules apply.
  - ▶ Look at all of the options on the opening page and read the Help pages or Search tips.
  - ▶ If you're doing more than just a basic one word or phrase search go straight to advanced search.
  - ▶ Look at the description of the website or database to check that it covers your subject area at the right level.
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# Not enough, or no suitable results

- ▶ If the keyword or phrase you're using doesn't return many hits, try a different one.
  - ▶ If the material is too old, you may be using a term that has gone out of fashion, look for a more up to date keyword or phrase.
  - ▶ Broaden your search, take out some of your limiters.
  - ▶ You may be trying the wrong database for your needs, try another one.
  - ▶ You may need to go back to your assignment and redefine your search, check with your lecturer that you are on the right lines.
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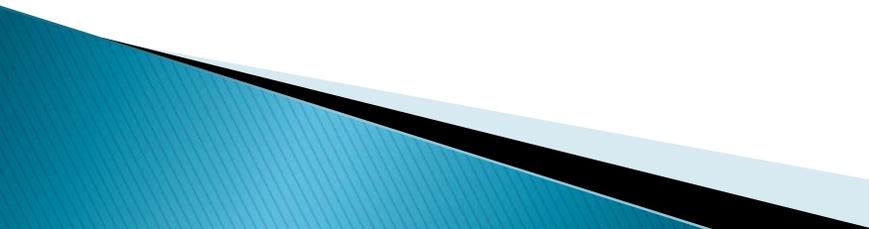
# Too many results

- ▶ You may need to add a further keyword or phrase to limit your search.
  - ▶ Try quotation marks around your phrase.
  - ▶ You can usually limit by date.
  - ▶ Check to see if you can limit to full text results only.
  - ▶ You can usually limit by type of publication; article, review, citation etc.
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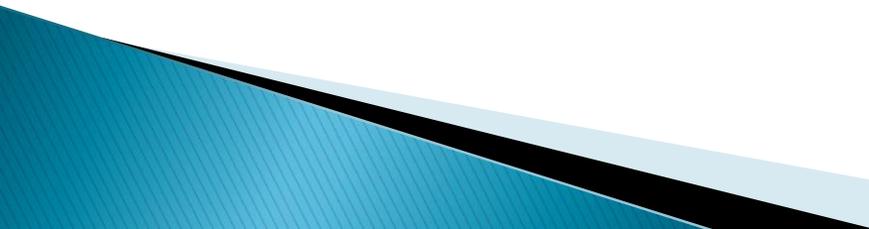
# SEARCHING THE INTERNET SAFELY

- ▶ The internet is an amazing source of information but you need to proceed with caution. Anyone can put information on the Web and it does not have to be accurate or true, but it is possible to identify and use good sources .
  - ▶ Look at the [Internet Detective](#) for a fun guide to using the internet.
  - ▶ Use [Google scholar](#) to filter out dubious or non academic websites.
  - ▶ Apply the following criteria when assessing the material on the internet.
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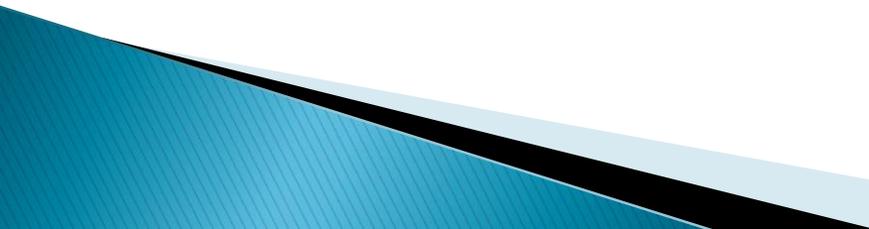
# Authority

- ▶ Who is the author of the site? Do you know their name? Do they list their qualifications? Are they a recognised expert, do they provide a list of publications and have they been previously published by an academic book publisher? You can cross check their details on Google.
  - ▶ Are they publishing on behalf of an academic or governmental body? Look at the URL for the domain `http://... gov, edu, ac.uk` or `org`.
  - ▶ Look at their About Us page if they have one, for information on the organisation, and check their credentials if you are not sure.
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# Accuracy and objectivity

- ▶ Is the information accurate and can it be supported? Is there any indication that facts have been verified by anyone else? Are there any errors on the site?
  - ▶ Does the author or sponsor of the website have a bias, are they trying to persuade you or to sell you something? Checking their About Us page will give you some idea of their intentions.
  - ▶ Is the web site mostly opinion or fact?
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# Currency and Depth

- ▶ Is the information up to date? check to see if it has been updated recently, or when the information was first put on. Many sites are created and then abandoned.
  - ▶ Are any links still current or have they expired?
  - ▶ Is the site frivolous or superficial, does it contain serious research? Does it have the level of information you need?
  - ▶ Would you feel confident citing it in your references?
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# Legal use of material

- ▶ You must always acknowledge the source of your information.
  - ▶ Using material from a book, journal or the Internet and trying to pass the work off as your own is plagiarism and is liable to disciplinary action.
  - ▶ Downloading or copying material is subject to the copyright laws listed below
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# Copyright

- ▶ Most published material in print or on the web is subject to copyright and you are responsible for complying with this.
- ▶ Always check the copyright notice to see what you can do.
- ▶ Normally you may make 1 copy for private study of:
- ▶ **One chapter or 5% of a book** (whichever is greater)
- ▶ **Up to 10% of a short book** (a short book has 200 or less pages)
- ▶ **One poem or short story of up to 10 pages** (from an anthology)
- ▶ **One article from an issue of a journal**
- ▶ **One copy of a web page**

# Keeping up to Date

- ▶ The library currently offers a current awareness service to staff and students and we can send you the latest contents pages of the print journals in your subject as they come in. Ask for this at the Help Desk
  - ▶ There is a New Books display in front of the issue desk.
  - ▶ Some Web sites and journals offer an alert service and will send you updates to keep you informed of changes, new publications etc. The service is usually free and you just need to register for it.
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# Organising your resources

- ▶ You don't need to print, download or copy everything.
  - ▶ Put your most useful websites into favourites and organise them into folders by each assignment. That way you won't need to repeat your search.
  - ▶ Use the Add to Favourites option in the eBooks catalogue to keep the books you want to use again.
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# Acknowledgements and Further Information.

- ▶ Much of the ideas for this slideshow came for the [online tutorials](#) produced by Leeds University. You will find further more detailed advice there on all aspects of web searching.
  - ▶ Another source I used which you may also find useful was [SAFARI](#) from the Open University website.
  - ▶ The [Internet Detective](#) is also well worth looking at.
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