

Information Skills for Language and Linguistic Science

Worksheet 2: What information do you need to find?

As a student here at the University of York, you will need to use a variety of different types of information to complete your assignments.

When putting forward arguments in essays, for example, your tutors will want you to provide **evidence** from a range of reliable, scholarly, current and authoritative sources. Many tutors will provide reading lists for you to follow; however it is also important to learn how to search for materials beyond these reading lists so that you can demonstrate breadth of knowledge and originality.

The first step to finding information is to think clearly about **what information you need** to complete a piece of work. This will allow you to focus your search effectively and not waste time finding irrelevant materials.

Once you have established what information you need, you can then start to track it down via the range of printed and electronic resources available to you here in York, as well as from sources further afield (via the Internet).

Example task: Make a list of the information that you would need in order to answer the following question:

Discuss the use of 'social class' as a variable in sociolinguistics. Mention ways in which it has been used in sociolinguistic studies, factors to be careful of when using it, and typical findings.

To answer this question successfully, you will need to think about the following:



1. How can we define 'social class' as a variable in sociolinguistics? Where can we find definitions of this phrase using authoritative sources?
2. Are there any similar variables that we could consider?
3. What sociolinguistic studies have discussed "social class"? How has it been used in different ways in different studies?
4. What are the main findings from the studies? Do they tend to agree with each other or disagree?

Before showing you where to go to find this information (worksheet 4), you need to consider:

Am I facing any specific constraints?

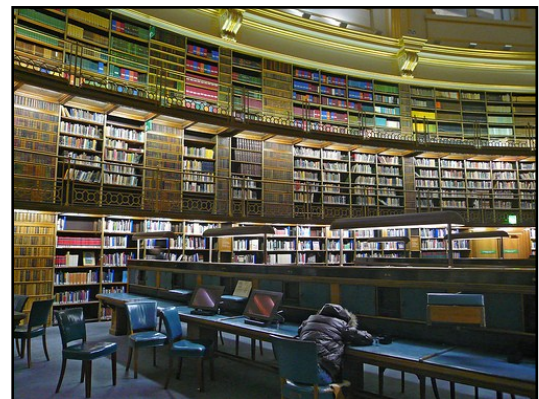
Once you have identified what information you need to find out, you might want to identify any particular constraints on you, for example **time**, **cost** or **access** factors¹. These constraints may affect how you proceed with your information search so it is important to consider them before you begin to find resources.



If you are working to a very tight deadline, for example, you will need to **limit your searching** to materials that you can access quickly and easily through the library's print and electronic collections.

Remember that your Academic Liaison Librarian can help you find resources at York: email to make an appointment.

If you are working on a longer assignment, such as an extended project, you will have more time to think about your research and find a range of resources. You may wish to **explore other library collections**, for example at the British Library or another university library. The library webpages have information about visiting the British Library's reading room at Boston Spa and also obtaining a SCONUL card which allows you access to other academic libraries.



Whether you are writing a short essay or a long thesis, it is always possible to order materials that are not available in York through the library's **Interlending** service. Please note that you will have to pay for this service and items do need to be ordered well in advance of your assignment deadline. Further details are available online: <http://www.york.ac.uk/library/servicesandfacilities/interlendinganddocumentsupply/>

Once you have identified what information you need to find and what time/cost/access constraints you are working under, if any, you are now ready to **create your search strategy...**

Move on to worksheet 3

¹ Richardson, L., & McBryde-Wilding, H. (2009). *Information skills for education students*. Exeter: Learning Matters.