

Independent Study: Sources of Information

Diploma Program in Development Leadership

Sources of Information for your Independent Study

- Print: books, magazines, newsletters, reports, course manuals
- A/V: videos, radio interviews, cassette tapes
- Electronic: e-mail discussions, Web sites, full-text electronic documents
- Live: interviews, participant observation

Hints for Using Sources

- Keep your key questions in mind
- Take clear, complete notes
- Document the source accurately (see "How to Cite References"), including page numbers for print sources and website addresses for material found on the internet
- Keep your notes well organized, in one consistent place

Books and Course Manuals

Finding Them

- Ask your advisor and colleagues for recommendations
- Ask for assistance in libraries - don't be shy!
- Check the Novanet catalogue, using key words that describe your subject
- If your topic is very precise and limited in scope, look for books that deal with a broader concept but may have a section or a chapter on your topic
- Don't be put off if your exact key word doesn't appear in the title of the book

Using Them

- Check Table of Contents and Index to identify relevant sections
- Check the Introduction to see if chapters are summarized
- Scan the first page and last page of chapter(s) to see if there's an overview or summary
- Read relevant sections carefully, and note the ideas that relate to your key questions
- Identify passages that you may want to quote, and copy them exactly
- **Copy down the page number for any material you want to quote**
- Check the Bibliography to see if it lists any other sources that may be helpful

Periodicals, Newsletters, Magazines

Finding Them

- Ask you advisor and colleagues for recommendations
- Try to think of organizations you know that specialize in your topic (e.g. health, micro-credit). Do they publish a journal or a newsletter?
- Ask for assistance in libraries: you may be able to use a periodical index to help identify relevant articles

Using Them

- Check the Table of Contents for each recent issue to see if there are articles that relate to your topic
- Check to see if there is an "abstract" or summary at the beginning of a relevant article
- Read relevant sections carefully, and note the ideas that relate to your key questions
- Identify passages that you may want to quote, and copy them exactly
- **Copy down the page number for any material you want to quote**
- Check the Bibliography to see if it lists any other sources that may be helpful

Audio-Visual Materials

Finding Them

- The Marie Michael library has a print list of videos related to development issues
- You can also search this list on the WWW at <http://coady.stfx.ca/library/video/>
- Lists for the Angus L Macdonald library at
St.FX: https://sites.stfx.ca/library/music_av_microform.html

Using Them

- Watch the video through once, getting the general idea
- Watch a second time, stopping the video to take notes at points of particular interest
- Rewind and replay sections that you wish to quote directly, and copy accurately
- The title, producer, production company and date of the film

Electronic Resources

Finding Them

- Begin with some development related web sites: some examples are given on the Marie Michael Library web site: <http://coady.stfx.ca/library/course-links/>
- Try entering key concept terms in a search engine such as [Google](#)

Using Them

- Save a document to your H: drive, or print useful documents so you can take them to your room, but look at how long a document is before you start to print!
- Be sure that you have the URL (address for WWW documents) copied down question the source: Who, What, Where, When, Why?

Structured Interviews

Arranging Them

- Ask your advisor if there might be a resource person in the local area who could give valuable input to your independent study
- Check with other participants, especially those in your Learning Group, to see if there is someone who has expertise in the area of your study who would be willing to be interviewed
- Contact the person with plenty of advance time

- Set a time and place to meet where you will not be interrupted

Doing Them

- Prepare a set of interview questions that relate to the issues of your Independent Study
- The purpose of the interview, and how the information you gather will be used. Be sure to check whether there is an issue of confidentiality concerning any of the interview information.
- State your questions clearly and slowly
- Record the responses as fully as you can
- Thank the person for taking the time for the interview
- Offer to show them any part of your study where their comments are recorded to check for accuracy

Using Them

- Be sure to transcribe the interview as accurately as possible from your notes
- If you wish to use an interviewee's exact words in your research paper, be sure to enclose them in quotation marks
- Include the interview in your reference list, as outlined in the handout "[How to Cite References](#)".