

# UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

## Academic Services

### ***Getting started on your extended assignment or dissertation***

#### ***Using reference material to get you started...***

Using a subject-specific reference collection will help you to: select your topic, define your subject area, suggest further reading and introduce you to keywords for your searching.

- Both printed and online reference resources are available in all subject areas, e.g. dictionaries and encyclopaedias.
- For online resources, start with eLibrary ([www.elibrary.bham.ac.uk](http://www.elibrary.bham.ac.uk)), linking to your subject and looking out for the type "Reference and Research Resource" and "Subject Gateways"
- Pick up or download a copy of a suitable subject guide from: <http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/lrs/subject/SubjectGuides.shtml>. As well as being valuable guides to the whole 'literature search' process, these should also introduce you to some key reference resources in your area.

#### ***Managing your references...***

Keep a record of your references from the **start** of and **throughout** your research- this will save you time when you are writing up.

- Follow some basic rules:
  - When photocopying a periodical article, always write down the details of the article on the copy (volume, issue, pages, year)
  - When using the Web, organize and maintain your bookmarks/ favourites by copying and pasting URLs into a suitably titled document
  - Use the email function when searching electronic indexes to send relevant references to yourself

You can manage your references in a number of ways, including:

- Card files
- Reference Management software (EndNote, Reference Manager, RefWorks)

Students submitting work must fulfil certain requirements in the way that references are cited. This applies to both printed and electronic material (e.g. any websites you may use). Use the i-cite guide to citing references at: [www.i-cite.bham.ac.uk](http://www.i-cite.bham.ac.uk). You can also pick up or download a copy of the 'Preparing & quoting references' guide from: [http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/lrs/subject/Final\\_Harvardsk04.pdf](http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/lrs/subject/Final_Harvardsk04.pdf)

#### ***Using electronic resources to search for material...***

The library catalogue doesn't allow you to search for contents of periodical articles: you need to search a range of resources (indexes/ abstracts or 'databases') using keywords.

- Start with the eLibrary (this groups electronic resources together by subject area): [www.eLibrary.bham.ac.uk](http://www.eLibrary.bham.ac.uk)
  - Login with your University username and password.
  - Select Subject Search then your subject area from the drop down category list and then a resource
  - the 'Key Resources' are a good place to start

You need to apply various search techniques to get the best results when searching.

- See the 'Effective searching of electronic resources' guide for further help:

<http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/lrs/subject/sk10effectivesearching.pdf>

Keep records of your searches: where/ how did you search?

- Some of the databases have guides with detailed help: <http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/lrs/subject/DatabaseGuides.shtml>

- Where relevant, consider using book chapters, statistics, official publications and newspaper articles. Try:
  - LexisNexis via the eLibrary

### ***Using the Library Catalogue & the eLibrary to gain access to that material ...***

After searching suitable resources you will have a list of references. You then have to:

- Check the Library Catalogue: (<http://libcat.bham.ac.uk>)
- Check the *Find eJournal* section of the eLibrary [www.eLibrary.bham.ac.uk](http://www.eLibrary.bham.ac.uk)
- Search by TITLE of the PERIODICAL an article appears in

If we don't have the full-text, you might want to investigate applying for an inter-library loan: <http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/ls/borrowing/documentsupply.shtml>

### ***Evaluating Web resources...***

The eLibrary contains tools that are evaluated and suitable for academic use. When searching the Web more widely (AFTER using the eLibrary) you need to carefully evaluate what you find:

- Be critical- consider the author, publisher, intended audience, sources, currency and accuracy.
- If possible, specify the type of info you require- images, websites, news.
- Use UK versions of search engines.
- Maybe try a subject gateway first: see [www.intute.ac.uk](http://www.intute.ac.uk)
- If you want to enhance your Internet searching skills for your assignments we recommend the Virtual Training Suite- subject based tutorials aimed at getting the most from the Web: <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/>
- The 'Guide to Effective Learning' helps you to develop your study skills: <http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/gel/>

### ***Help with presenting your assignment/ dissertation***

- If you want to consult a University of Birmingham PhD thesis, search the Library Catalogue selecting 'Theses catalogue' from the collection list.
- To see an example of an undergraduate dissertation you will need to speak to the staff in your department to see if they have copies available

### ***Summary- top tips***

- Use reference material to get you started.
- As well as managing your references and learning how to cite them correctly, remember that you have to read the full-text of the references you cite.
- Use suitable electronic resources ([www.eLibrary.bham.ac.uk](http://www.eLibrary.bham.ac.uk)) to search for books and periodical articles
- Check the Library Catalogue (<http://libcat.bham.ac.uk>) to see if books or periodicals are available
- Use the Virtual Training Suite ([www.vts.intute.ac.uk](http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk)) to enhance your Web searching skills, but don't just rely on websites for your research.
- Brush up on your study skills by using GEL ([www.is.bham.ac.uk/gel](http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/gel))

### ***Further help and support***

For further help with finding information in your subject area, please contact your Academic Support Team: <http://www.is.bham.ac.uk/lrs/subject/subjectspecialists.shtml>