The Ocean of Information aims to introduce you to the most popular information sources and helps you to see how each might be useful in the context of your academic studies. Click in the boxes below to find out more. Click on the button to return to this page.
You should always ask permission prior to including personal details in your work. Contributors may prefer to remain anonymous.

social media

Social Media

Useful for finding out what others are thinking.

Use with caution in your research. How reliable is the information? People’s thoughts and feelings can change too!

These include blogs, and tools for sharing photos and information amongst friends and groups.

Why not follow UoP Library on your favourite social networking resource: Liblog, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest or Instagram?
Personal Communications

You may use these to add a personal, research element to your work.

They could be letters, emails or they could be opinions gathered from a survey or interview.

You should always ask permission prior to including personal details in your work. Contributors may prefer to remain anonymous.

Find out how to refer to non-recoverable material
As well as providing information on current affairs, newspapers are useful sources of public opinion and include reviews. They can be useful for historical research, providing primary evidence from the period in which they were published.

Newspapers may be local or national, tabloid or broadsheet, they may also be specialist, e.g. Broadcast.

Tabloids and broadsheets are written for different audiences. Compare news stories from tabloids, or ‘red tops’, such as the Sun and the Mirror with ‘broadsheets’ such as the Times and the Guardian.

Find and read full text newspaper articles from all over the world using Nexis database.

Find out how to reference a newspaper article.

You may find other recommendations for newspaper archives on the Subject pages.
Websites

Use the web to find quick facts, current information, information about companies and organisations and information from the government.

Always evaluate the information that you find on the web. Ask questions such as who is responsible for the site, why have they written it, how up-to-date is it. For more information take a look at the guide Evaluating Internet Sources.

Use more than one search engine. Use the advanced search options to find what you need more quickly and easily. Search by domain name, if appropriate, e.g.: .ac.uk UK academic sites .gov.uk UK government .org.uk UK non profit making organisations .co.uk UK companies

Find good quality websites recommended by your librarian on the Subject pages of the library website.
Magazines are usually aimed at the general public, but can have a place in student research. *Vogue*, for example, will be useful for fashion students.

Use these to keep up with changing trends, ideas or public opinions.

They are usually published weekly or monthly.

Articles vary in length and will usually be written by journalists.

Find magazine articles by searching **Nexis**. When you see your search results, limit by **publication type** to magazines and journals.

Find out how to reference a **magazine article**.

Some magazines have their own websites where you can read sample articles and view additional information.

They are usually available in printed format or as personal electronic subscriptions. Sometimes they are available as library electronic subscriptions.
Visual arts students might use this for inspiration for their design work. Others may use it to illustrate particular points within presentations or research. It may also help with learning a language.

It may be images, video clips, podcasts, computer games etc.

Images may be from printed or electronic sources.

Audio-Visual Information

Images, just like other information sources, will be subject to copyright even if they are available on the web.

The library has some good quality image, video and sound resources for educational use. A good place to start is the Visual Culture Subject Page. For television and radio broadcasts, use Box of Broadcasts (BoB).

For more information about finding and referencing non-text materials visit the Mediascape guide.

You can find A-V information on Discovery. Limit your source type to non-print resources, audio or videos. You may also see some related images in the right-hand column.

First Home Game 07-08 Season by diana tri wulandari. Flickr
Use these to find quick facts. They are useful to consult at the planning stage of your research and can provide you with keywords to help you search the web or library catalogues and databases effectively.

These include dictionaries, encyclopedias and directories and are often ‘reference only’ and cannot be borrowed from the Library.

Resources may be printed or electronic.

Find out how to reference an **entry in a reference book with authors** or an **entry with no author**.

If you search **Discovery** you will sometimes see a link to your topic in Credo Reference. Look for it in the right hand column. You may also see a **research starter** as the first hit in your search results.

Use **Credo Reference** database to search an online library of reference resources. If you just want a dictionary try the Oxford English Dictionary, **OED Online**.
Use these journals to give a professional viewpoint to your work. They contain information aimed at people working in a particular trade or profession.

Articles vary in length, but are often fairly short and readable.

Trade and Professional Journals

They are published regularly, usually weekly or monthly.

They may be printed or electronic.

They include product reviews, industry news, exhibition and competition adverts. Job adverts are also featured.

Usually referenced as academic journals but sometimes as magazines.

Articles are not peer reviewed, but are usually written by people with a sound knowledge of the industry.

You might want to regularly browse some trade journals relating to your industry. Find them on the journal display shelves in the library.

You can find journal articles in any subject area by searching Discovery. Limit your source type to trade publications.

You can use tools called databases to help you search the contents of these and other types of journal. Visit the Subject pages to find specific databases for your subject area.
Academic Textbooks

They present well established ideas and theories and usually cover a broad topic area in considerable detail.

Use these when you want an introduction to a topic area. You are unlikely to read a book from cover to cover. Use the contents page and index to help you locate what you want to find out about.

They are reviewed by an editorial board so you can usually trust that the content is reliable and accurate.

The book may be edited and divided into chapters which are written by different authors but relate to the main theme.

Format may be printed or electronic.

Use the Library Catalogue to find printed or electronic books in the University of Portsmouth Library. Alternatively search Discovery and limit your source type to books and ebooks.

Find out what books are available by searching COPAC or an online bookshop such as Blackwell’s.
Use these when you know that you want very specific, academic information. They are published regularly, usually monthly or quarterly.

**Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles**

Articles are peer reviewed, i.e. the quality of the article has been reviewed by an editorial board.

They contain articles, written by academics. The sources used to write the articles are included at the end in a Reference List or Bibliography.

If you are an undergraduate, you are unlikely to browse scholarly journals.

You can use tools called **databases** to help you search the contents of these and other types of journal. Visit the **Subject** pages to find specific databases for your subject area.

You can find scholarly articles in any subject area by searching **Discovery**. Limit your source type to **academic journals**.

They may be in printed or electronic format.

Find out how to reference an **academic journal article**.
Academics present new ideas and research at conferences. Papers are presented and usually written up and published as ‘proceedings’ which are often peer-reviewed. There are opportunities for debates and discussions to progress new ideas too.

Refer to these if your topic of interest is very new and little has been written about it in books and journals. If you are searching Discovery, choose conference materials as the source type. If you want to find conference papers, Zetoc and ISI Proceedings are two specific databases.