

OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION SOURCES

Lesson No.	Title of the Lesson	Skills	Activity
5	Overview of Information Sources	Information Gathering and Generation, Sorting and Organisation, Effective Communication, Problem Solving and Decision Making	Searching Information Sources as per requirements of users, Interacting with information sources in libraries/internet

Summary

Everyone needs to be aware of where to look for information, how to access it and how to use it. The sources from where we get information are called information sources and these comprise documents, humans, institutions as well as mass media like radio and television. Information sources are in grouped as Documentary Sources and Non-Documentary Sources.

All recorded sources of information, irrespective of their content and form, come under **documentary sources**. The three types of documentary or sources of information are- primary, secondary, and tertiary.

A **primary document** is a document that was written at the time of an event or period of research.

A **secondary document** is written after an event - usually the authors will not have witnessed the event themselves. Such documents are usually written with reference to primary documents and attempt to provide an interpretation.

Tertiary documents usually act as pointers to primary and secondary documents. They are indexes, directories, bibliographies and other categorised collections of information - documents that you can turn to and be guided to other, potentially relevant, documents on a particular subject.

Non-documentary sources of information are those sources which are not recorded in any form. These include – Humans, Organisations, Mass Media other than print media, and Internet.

In this lesson you will learn about various categories of information sources and their use and importance in study, research and development.

Principal Points

- Sources from where we get information are called information sources. Information sources are of two types, i) Documentary Sources and ii) Non-Documentary Sources.
- All recorded sources are documentary sources. All non-recorded sources are non-documentary sources.
- Based on the Information content and organizational level, a documentary source may be primary, secondary or tertiary source.
- Based on physical format, a documentary source may be either on paper based media or on other media.
- Primary sources contain original information and are in large number and widely scattered. Periodicals, technical reports, dissertations and theses, patents and standards are primary sources of information.
- Secondary sources of information are based on primary sources and present the contents of primary sources in condensed form and list them in helpful way, so that the existence of primary documents is known and access to them is made easy.
- Secondary sources can be grouped under four broad types viz. i) Index/ Abstract type, ii) Survey type, iii) Reference books, and iv) Translations.
- Tertiary sources of information are based on primary and secondary sources of information and act as key to the primary and secondary sources.
- Based on their physical form, documentary sources are either on paper based media or other media. Paper based documentary sources include published as well as unpublished sources.
- Documentary sources on other media include photographic, electronic, magnetic and optical media.
- Non-documentary sources of information are those sources which are not recorded in any form. These sources comprise Humans, Organizations, Mass Media (Like television and Radio); and Internet.

Build your Understanding

Wherever we look, information surrounds us- in newspapers, television, computers, newspapers, road signs, etc. We spend most of our lives processing information and deciding how to use it. In today's information age, making the ability to find and use the right information is crucial to academic and professional success. And it is finding the right sources of information at the right time that are key to success.

What's Important to Know ?

1. In today's information society we can find information on almost anything we want. Increasing sophisticated technologies makes it easy to access what we need.
2. Information is available in a range of formats and it is important to select and use those appropriate to your needs.
3. What information source you choose depends on what, why and how much information you need and the time you have for finding and using it.
4. You may use a single or a variety of sources depending on your need for current, detailed, available or costly information.

Did You Know ?

1. The libraries have a variety of information sources ensure that knowledge and technology are available to everyone, not just the those who can afford to buy their own information.
2. It is now common, especially in educational and research establishments, for libraries and the documents that they hold, to be available online.
3. In order to identify which source is credible, an understanding of the source's depth, objectivity, currency, authority and purpose is to be examined.
4. Presently, the Internet is considered to be the most popular source of information and the preferred choice for new news ahead of television, radio and newspapers.
5. A question often asked in modern times is –'What is the best source of information-traditional library or Internet websites ?' Well, the answer to this is 'traditional library' as not everything on the Internet is true, it can be edited and misinformed.

Evaluate Yourself

1. What is meant by source of information?
2. Name the three sources of information.
3. Give five examples of primary sources of information.
4. How to you choose the best source of information ?

Extend your Horizon

Visit any university library in your city. Search for one each – a primary, secondary and tertiary source of information. Write down the bibliographic details of each title.