

# Being digital

## The information universe

### 1: Introduction

When you are looking for information, you should try to be clear about the purpose of the information you are looking for. Are you looking for opinions on a particular product? Or are you looking for some statistics you can use for a report?

Once you have a purpose in mind, you will be in a position to concentrate on the most appropriate types of resources that will provide you with information you need.

### Learning outcome

By the end of this activity, you should know why it is important to be clear about the intended purpose of the information you are looking for.

### 2: Categories of information

These categories will help you to focus of the type of information you should be looking for:

#### News or current information

What's the latest on X?

#### Ideas and opinions

What do people think about X?

## **Research results**

What does the latest research tell us about X?

## **Theoretical analysis/theory**

What are the different theoretical perspectives on X?

## **Facts and figures**

How many cases of X were there last year?

## **History or background**

When did X start? What happened?

## **People's experience**

What is it like to suffer from X? What is it like to use Y service?

## **Persuasion**

Is the information trying to persuade you to buy something, think something, or do something?)

### 3: Types of information

Let's imagine that you are looking for information on mobile phones.

Imagine that you have the following categories of information:

- a) facts and figures
- b) research results
- c) persuasion
- d) history or background
- e) news or current information
- f) people's experience

For each of the four purposes listed below, choose which category is most appropriate.

There is no right answer, one or more of the information types could be useful in each instance, but some will be more relevant than others.

1. You want to buy a new mobile phone
2. You want recent information about the possible health risks associated with mobile phones
3. You want to know how many teenagers in the UK own a mobile phone
4. You want to find out when mobile phones first appeared and what they looked like

(You will find the answers to this question in Appendix 1 on page 7).

## 4: Your information universe

You can go to a number of places to find the category of information you are looking for. Any of the categories of information listed earlier might be found in the places listed below.

Click on each of the places below to find examples of information you might find there. This begins to give a flavour of the range of information sources available to you, many of which you probably use already.

Online information plays an increasingly important part in terms of all the places and categories listed on this page.

### You

- For **ideas and opinions**, start with your own.
- For **research results**, have a look at any you have collected yourself.
- For **experience**, think about your own.

### Your workplace, college or university

- For **news**, refer to noticeboards, meetings and emails.
- For **ideas and opinions**, refer to colleagues and discussion groups.
- For **research results**, look at journal articles held in the library.
- For **theoretical information**, look in books and articles held in the library.
- For **facts and figures**, refer to the information department, or look through any information systems you have access to.
- For **historical information**, look at notes, records and archives.
- For **experience**, refer to colleagues, clients and customers.

## Your local community

- For **news**, read local newspapers, watch local television, or listen to the radio.
- For **ideas and opinions**, refer to your local media and community groups.
- For **research results** or **theoretical information**, go to the public library.
- For **facts and figures**, visit your local library, or ask the local council.
- For **historical information**, refer to the archives of local organisations or the local press.
- For **experience**, ask local support groups.

## National and international

- For **news**, refer to the media (newspapers, TV, radio) or the specialist press.
- For **ideas and opinions**, go to the media or conferences and ask for information from experts and relevant organisations.
- For **research results**, go to national libraries, specialist organisations, or read relevant journals.
- For **theoretical information**, go to national libraries, specialist organisations, or read relevant journals and books.
- For **facts and figures**, visit national libraries or refer to the government statistical service.
- For **historical information**, go to the records office.
- For **experience**, ask national support groups.

## Cyberspace

- For **news**, look at the internet, electronic newspapers, electronic journals and watch satellite television.
- For **ideas and opinions**, look at the internet and join electronic discussion groups.
- For **research results** and **theoretical information**, look at online databases and electronic journals.
- For **facts and figures**, look at government websites.
- For **historical information**, look at specialist websites.
- For **experience**, visit relevant websites, blogs and social media groups.

## 5: Summary

In order to find the most appropriate types of information for your requirements, you need to be focused on what it is you are looking for.

Think carefully about:

- the type of information you are looking for - the category
- why you want the information - the purpose
- the best place to go to find the category of information you are looking for.

Planning this in advance of your search will save you time, and ensure that you find the most appropriate content.

## References

### Being digital activity

The information universe

## **Appendix 1: Answers and feedback**

### **Types of information (page 3)**

The answers to the exercise are detailed below

1) You want to buy a new mobile phone

Two categories could be seen as appropriate:

c) persuasion

f) people's experience

2. You want recent information about the possible health risks associated with mobile phones

Two categories could be seen as appropriate:

b) research results

e) news or current information

3. You want to know how many teenagers in the UK own a mobile phone

The most appropriate category could be seen to be:

a) facts and figures

4. You want to find out when mobile phones first appeared and what they looked like

The most appropriate category could be seen to be:

d) history or background