

How to Find Out

Printed and On-line Sources

Fifth Edition

G. CHANDLER

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Preface

It is pleasing that a fifth edition of the work should become necessary to meet the still considerable public demand. Four new chapters and over 300 new sources of information have been listed, including many on-line computer-based current awareness and information retrieval services, and there are 46 new illustrations. The book aims at describing examples of printed and on-line sources of information on all subjects. It is designed to meet the needs of students at schools, colleges and universities for a general guide to sources of information. Examples have also been chosen to meet the needs of firms and industrial organizations who are considering the formation of a library or information bureau to meet the ever-increasing demands for information in connection with general problems of production, overseas markets, personnel problems and the like. This book will, it is thought, also be of interest to the general reader who wishes to understand how his local library is arranged and how on-line services are developing.

It was decided to arrange the printed sources of information by the main classes of the Dewey Decimal Classification because this has been widely adopted throughout the world, either in its original or in its extended form, known as the Universal Decimal Classification. All classifications of human knowledge are imperfect and result in the separation of much related material. It has, therefore, become very important for all educational courses to give some training in the use of the Decimal Classification so that students do not miss essential information. It is even more important for industry that managers, technicians and ordinary workpeople should be made aware of the useful information available in perhaps unexpected sources.

It is, of course, impossible for a book of this nature to be comprehensive or consistent. The aim has been merely to indicate the types of sources of information and to suggest a methodical way of setting about finding information. Although a few of the printed works mentioned have suspended publication, they have been retained as types of sources of information, for most are still of current value. As many works are being constantly revised, it was decided to omit dates of publication, in order to make the book more readable. Bibliographical details can easily be traced when the author's name is known. If this book helps its readers to get a bird's-eye view of the complexities of the world today and of the methods of finding printed information to increase understanding, it will have achieved its purpose.

This volume is the first of a series. Later volumes have dealt in a more detailed bibliographical way with the sources of information required in various careers, from the time of the commencement of training to its application in the most advanced research. There are separate volumes on the sources of information for Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Education, Art, Literature and History, etc.

I am grateful to the readers who kindly drew my attention to some errors in the earlier editions, and hope to receive suggestions for incorporation in the next edition.

The four new chapters on the new on-line sources of information break new ground in trying to describe for the generalist and the specialist how on-line information services are being rapidly developed to make the latest information quickly available.

27 June 1980

G. Chandler

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CHAPTER 1

How to Find Information

INFORMATION for an educational project, a doctoral dissertation, an industrial investigation or a general inquiry may be obtained from one of the following sources :

1. Books.
2. Articles in encyclopedias, handbooks, etc.
3. Yearbooks.
4. Periodicals.
5. Newspapers.
6. Documents.
7. Local experts and consultants.
8. National experts and consultants.
9. International experts and consultants.
10. On-line sources of information.

For some types of inquiry, only one of the above sources needs to be consulted. For many inquiries, all the above sources must be explored if sufficient information is to be found for the purpose intended. Each of these sources has its own limitations and advantages, which must be considered when making use of the information provided. No information should be accepted uncritically. You should always cross-check with at least one other source : misprints occur in most works and misinterpretation of facts is common.

Books are in many cases the most important sources of information, although they are very often necessarily out of date. Books are easily available in local libraries or may be borrowed from other libraries. Consequently they are usually the first source of information to be considered.

Before accepting information published in a book, you should spend

a few minutes examining its structure, for this will assist you in evaluating the book. The dust-jacket often contains information on the qualifications of the author and his point-of-view. Allowance must, of course, be made for the natural desire of the publisher and author to present the book in its best light. The title page should always be read carefully. It may contain a sub-title explaining the intention or scope of the work, or the qualifications of the author. The imprint (place of publication, publisher and date) is of value. The work is likely to be authoritative if published by a publisher who specializes in the subject of the book. The date will indicate how up-to-date the book is and the reverse of the title page should also be examined, in case this reveals whether the edition is substantially a reprint of an older work. The foreword, preface or introduction will often summarize the purpose of the volume (see Fig. 53). The table of contents will not only outline the way the work is arranged and help you to trace a particular piece of information (see Fig. 28) if the index is defective, but will also suggest the point-of-view. Every book is based on a combination of objective facts and subjective interpretation of them. The contents will suggest whether the author has set out to prove a theory or to spread a particular belief. The book may be of great value even if it contains propaganda, but greater care must be taken in evaluating the information. The running headlines on the top of the pages may contain useful information on the text. The index can reveal the scope of the book by listing the topics discussed (see Fig. 54) and the number of pages devoted to them. It can also reveal bias by the number of references under particular topics. The bibliography will reveal the author's sources and will indicate whether he is up-to-date and thorough in his approach.

Articles in encyclopedias, handbooks and similar works of reference are likely to be more up-to-date than many books, for they are being constantly revised. They are likely to be more authoritative if the articles are signed (see Fig. 35) for this fixes responsibility for errors as well as credit for the handling of the subject. You should check whether the author is still living, and whether he is still an authority, before evaluating the information in the article.

Many encyclopedias try to keep up-to-date by the issue of yearbooks. Many specialized associations and general publishers also issue annuals, which give current information or survey recent developments. They