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Communication Research

Strategies and Sources

Fifth Edition

Rebecca B. Rubin
Kent State University

Alan M. Rubin
Kent State University

Linda J. Piele
University of Wisconsin–Parkside

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For more information, contact
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10 Davis Drive
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USA
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International Headquarters
Thomson Learning
290 Harbor Drive, 2nd Floor
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Foreword

Communication Research: Strategies and Sources is designed to acquaint students with research and the vast array of information sources available in communication. It describes the strategies involved in selecting, refining, and researching communication topics. It is a guide to the literature, explaining the content and utility of significant and representative communication research sources. It is also a communication research manual, providing an opportunity for students to use and become familiar with communication research materials. Throughout the book, we stress the overall strategy of searching the literature for information on a particular topic.

This book provides a comprehensive overview of the necessary steps to begin communication research and describes on-line and published sources that are available in or accessible through most medium-sized college and university libraries. The works that are described are used when conducting documentary, archival, or library research. This type of research is necessary before any other research methodology is attempted.

Communication is a broad discipline in which researchers are interested in many subject areas. Thus, we explain the structure of the communication field and the types of research done by students of communication, and focus on the basics of documentary and library research. These basics include developing and refining research questions, writing and organizing, beginning investigation of a topic, and acquiring the tools that make the research process more efficient. We also describe each type of communication research source that is available for accomplishing a research goal.

This text is beneficial for both undergraduate and graduate students who need to become acquainted with the variety of available communication research resources and procedures. We introduce students to sources in interpersonal, group, organizational, public, and mass communication and to common research strategies. Because the book is designed as a supplemental text, there is a fair amount of flexibility in its use—from one or two students working independently, to a module within a theory course, to an entire class focused on communication research. Any undergraduate or graduate communication course that requires students to use the literature of the field is an appropriate vehicle for offering instruction in researching topics.

For example, this text is a helpful introduction to research procedures and the communication literature in Introduction to Graduate Studies classes as well as in undergraduate and graduate Communication Theory and Research classes. It is appropriate for a variety of introductory-level undergraduate classes in which it is desirable to acquaint students with the literature and research procedures of the field. In addition, instructors may select from among the many sources cited those that are pertinent to their specific courses, such as Freedom of Speech, Media Law, Organizational Communication, Investigative Reporting, Interpersonal Communication, and Media Research. This book is also a useful manual to aid research-paper writing and development by students working on

independent studies. It is most helpful for graduate student preparation of thesis and dissertation proposals and for the literature reviews required in many undergraduate and graduate courses.

Students unfamiliar with the library will need some general orientation instruction. The library staff will be able to clarify such matters as the use of the library catalog, location of periodicals, electronic media, and any special location symbols used in the library.

Some chapters include exercises that require students to use several annotated sources. Generally, these questions hypothetically place students in a specific course and present a need to acquire information for a specific project. For example, "You are preparing to lead a discussion on the effects of cartoon violence on children in your Group Communication class. . . ." These assignments lead students to important communication research sources and provide perspective on how the sources are useful in a variety of courses and situations. Questions reiterate points made in the text of the chapter and show how the sources can be used to build a comprehensive bibliography on a chosen communication topic. Answers to the Exercise questions for Part 2 are available to instructors from the authors. Chapters in other sections of the book include exercises for classroom discussion.

Users of previous editions will notice major changes in the chapters devoted to searching the Internet and electronic databases. We have also updated all sources, adding new ones and eliminating some older materials, and have changed several Exercise questions. At the end of most chapters we now include a boxed example of student projects and explanation about how some students have used chapter information for these projects. There have been some additions to the APA style since the last edition, namely, how to cite Internet sources. We include these changes in Appendix A.

We have always been uncomfortable updating this text because we know that by the time it is published, some new important sources will appear or new editions will appear. To counter this trend, we have developed a website for this text that will contain new sources and Internet sites, updated materials that have been published, and additional information for students. This site can be accessed through Wadsworth's Communication Café at:

<http://communication.wadsworth.com>

As usual, we are grateful for the comments and suggestions of the many students, teachers, and scholars who have helped us refine our ideas throughout our five editions: Sherilyn Marrow Ferguson, University of Northern Colorado; Janie M. Harden Fritz, Duquesne University; Mike Hemphill, University of Arkansas at Little Rock; Susan A. Holton, Bridgewater State College; Sandra M. Ketrow, University of Rhode Island; Alan C. Lerstrom, Luther College; and Roger Smitter, North Central College.

R.B.R.
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Introduction

We believe that university students actively seek to master the available tools when learning about the field of communication. The library contains many of these communication research tools. Our aim is to introduce these tools to you and to explain how they can be used to help increase your knowledge of communication. How much effort you give to this learning process will determine how much you personally gain.

OVERVIEW

This book is divided into three main parts. In Part 1 we explain why and how communication research is done. After surveying the field of communication, we look at the research process, selecting and narrowing research topics and questions, searching the literature, and using computers to search databases and access information on computer networks.

In Part 2 we explore the available types of communication research sources or reference materials. We consider general communication research sources such as subject handbooks, textbooks, encyclopedias, and annual reviews. These materials are helpful in defining subjects or topics you may wish to investigate. We also examine access tools such as bibliographies, guides to the literature, indexes, and abstracts. These tools are needed to locate sources and materials. In the next two chapters we discuss more specific communication research sources, namely, communication periodicals (scholarly journals and professional magazines) and information compilations (collections, statistical compendia, government publications, yearbooks, directories, dictionaries, and manuals). These periodicals and compilations are important for finding primary and factual data and for developing research projects.

In Part 3 we explain how to design and conduct research investigations and how to complete literature reviews and other projects. The final chapter ties together the ideas presented throughout the book.

Because we try to highlight a representative sample of references in each chapter, not all works important to the study of communication can be discussed at length. Numerous sources, though, are listed at the ends of the chapters and are indexed at the end of the book. The sources we have selected do not constitute an exhaustive list. We chose them because they represent the many diverse areas of communication research, they are written in or translated into the English language, and they are available at many college and university libraries. We also identify some specific sources, such as archival and legal references, which are available via specialized libraries, because they are accessible and of particular utility to communication researchers.

As with any book, materials become dated, and new or revised sources become available between the time a book is written and is available for use. Visit our new website at <**http://communication.wadsworth.com**> for new and

updated sources. You will undoubtedly uncover other important bibliographic tools in your literature searches. As you do, just add them in the chapters and to the source index for quick reference in the future.

We mentioned earlier that a major goal is to introduce and explain bibliographic tools that are available for investigating communication topics. In so doing, we hope we will accomplish a secondary goal of reducing the anxiety many students feel when researching a communication topic for the first time or when confronted with so much information that they don't know where to start. We anticipate that this book will be a useful starting point and a reference guide and that it will assist you in learning about communication.

HELPFUL HINTS

Students who have used earlier versions of this book have offered some helpful hints. These tips make a lot of sense.

First, get to know the physical layout of the library you will be using. Find the reference section, the reserve desk, the library catalogs, and the computer stations. Discover how books and periodicals are arranged in your library. This information is usually available in printed form when you enter the library. Ask about the availability of CD-ROM databases, on-line databases, and accessibility of the Internet. Consult a reference librarian or staff member at an information desk if you have a question, any question.

Second, complete the Exercises at the ends of the chapters. Be sure to read each chapter thoroughly before trying to answer the questions. In fact, we constructed the Exercises so that reading the chapter first will be an enormous aid to completing the questions. Students who were looking for shortcuts in the past became frustrated. Your amount of effort will actually be reduced by reading the chapters before trying to answer the questions.

There are no trick questions in the Exercises. Each reference source you are asked to use is explained in the chapter text. Read the annotations carefully. The sources that are annotated or described in detail in the text sometimes provide clues for answering the questions. When you locate reference sources that are new to you, examine them carefully. Explore the table of contents, examine the preface and introduction, and look for an index. In so doing, the sources themselves may provide you with a more efficient method of use. If you find yourself spending more than 15 minutes on any one question, your approach to the problem may not be the best. Ask a reference librarian for advice. Also, ask for help when you cannot find a source you need. It may be shelved in a different location in the library.

Third, if you are working on a research paper, literature review, or research prospectus as you read this book, keep in mind the sources you examine as you develop a research topic or question. You might find it advantageous to return to the materials discussed in earlier chapters for a more thorough examination. For instance, the Exercises in Part 2 will sometimes ask you to look at only one volume of a multivolume work. Once you have solidified your own research topic, you might want to go back to the other volumes to see if they can help lead you to additional references. Because you already will be familiar with how

these sources are used, it will require little effort to check them for pertinent information.

In a similar vein, if you have a clear-cut topic in mind as you progress through the chapters, do not hesitate to examine each source thoroughly as you use the guide. This will save you time in the future. You can easily compile a thorough bibliography as you proceed through the chapters of this book.

Fourth, update the references in this book whenever possible. Students in the past have found that they misplace additional or updated references if they do not add them when they are first located. Update and add your new references at the ends of the chapters and in the index. You may also want to augment the annotations and citations with your own notes on using the materials. In this way, the book will become an even more useful and comprehensive collection of communication research materials.

Contents

Foreword xi
Introduction xiii

PART ONE
Communication Research Strategies 1

CHAPTER 1 STUDYING COMMUNICATION 3

The Communication Discipline 3
Structure of the Field 5
Structure of Professional Communication Organizations 7
Activities 8
Publications 9
Types of Associations 9
Communication Research Projects 11
Academic Pursuits 12
Professional Pursuits 13
Summary 13
References 14
Examples 14
Exercises 15

CHAPTER 2 SEARCHING THE COMMUNICATION LITERATURE 17

Becoming Familiar With Your Library and Its Services 18
Search Strategy Outline 20
The Topic 21
Selecting, Narrowing, and Adjusting a Topic 21
The Search 26
Preparing for the Literature Search 26
Deciding What Type of Search to Do 29
The Results 31
Evaluating and Summarizing Information 31
Documenting the Search Process 35
Tips on Searching the Literature 38
Writing 38
Summary 40
References 41
Examples 41
Exercises 43

CHAPTER 3 USING THE INTERNET FOR COMMUNICATION RESEARCH 46

Research and the World Wide Web 47
Gaining Access to the Internet 48
Internet Addresses 49
Browser Basics 50

Troubleshooting 51
Evaluating Internet Sources 52
Finding Resources on the World Wide Web 53
Communicating on the Internet 58
E-mail 58
Electronic Discussion Groups 58
Usenet Newsgroups 60
CIOS/Comserve 61
Ethical Issues 61
Summary 62
References 62
Examples 63
Exercises 64

CHAPTER 4 USING COMPUTERS TO SEARCH ELECTRONIC DATABASES 66

Differing Technological Environments 66
Varieties of Computerized Databases 67
Bibliographic Databases 67
Directory Databases 68
Source Databases 68
How to Search Computerized Databases 69
Standard Search Features 70
Controlled Vocabulary Versus Key-Word Searching 70
Boolean Operators 72
Parentheses 74
Alternatives to Boolean Operators 75
Proximity Operators 75
Phrase Searching 76
Field-Specific Searching 76
Truncation 78
Word and Phrase Indexes 78
Creating and Reusing Sets 79
Search Strategies: Boolean Searching 79
Natural Language Searching 81
Search Strategies for the World Wide Web 82
Using Your Search Results 84
Mediated Searching 85
Summary 85
References 86
Examples 86
Exercises 87

PART TWO
Communication Research Sources 91

CHAPTER 5 GENERAL SOURCES 93

Handbooks 93
Textbooks 96
Encyclopedias 97

Annual Reviews and Series 98
Selected Sources 100
Handbooks 100
Textbooks 102
Encyclopedias 104
Annual Reviews 106
Series 106
Examples 107
Exercises 108

CHAPTER 6 ACCESS TOOLS 110

Bibliographies 111
Guides to the Literature 113
Legal Research 115
On-line Search Strategies: Finding Additional Bibliographies and Guides 116
Bibliographies on the World Wide Web 116
Periodical Indexes 117
Discipline-Based Periodical Indexes 120
General and Interdisciplinary Periodical Indexes 123
Locating Book Reviews 125
Citation Indexes 125
Media Indexes 126
Selected Sources 129
Bibliographies 129
Guides to the Literature 130
Periodical Indexes and Abstracts 132
Media Indexes 134
Examples 137
Exercises 138

CHAPTER 7 COMMUNICATION PERIODICALS 140

Scholarly Journals 140
Professional and Trade Magazines 145
Selected Sources 147
Scholarly Journals 147
Professional and Trade Periodicals 152
Electronic Journals 153
Examples 154
Exercises 155

CHAPTER 8 INFORMATION COMPILATIONS 157

Collections and Archives 158
Speech Collections 158
Media Collections 159
Legal Collections 162
Measurement Collections 163
Statistical Sources 164
U.S. Government Publications 166
Yearbooks 170

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Directories 171
Dictionaries 173
Manuals 174
Selected Sources 174
Collections 174
Statistical Sources 177
U.S. Government Publications 178
Yearbooks 180
Directories 181
Dictionaries 183
Manuals 185
Examples 186
Exercises 187

PART THREE
Communication Research Processes 191

CHAPTER 9 DESIGNING THE COMMUNICATION RESEARCH PROJECT 193

The Research Process 193
Descriptive and Explanatory Research 194
Research Stages 194
Approaches to Communication Research 197
Message- or Artifact-Oriented Research 197
People- or Behavior-Oriented Research 205
Research Ethics 210
Summary 211
Selected Sources 212
Comprehensive Texts 212
Content Analysis 212
Design and Measurement 213
Media Research 213
Qualitative and Applied Research 214
Rhetorical and Media Criticism 215
Statistics 215
Survey Research 216
Exercises 217

CHAPTER 10 WRITING RESEARCH PAPERS 218

Basic Elements of Good Writing 218
Tense and Agreement 218
Voice 219
Transitions 220
Grammar 220
Paragraph Structure 220
Quoting and Paraphrasing 220
Style 222
Writing Formats 224

Proofreading 226
Proofreading Checklist 226
Proofreading Symbols 226
Submitting Manuscripts 227
Summary 229
References 229
Exercises 230

CHAPTER 11 PREPARING RESEARCH PROJECTS 232

Abstracts 232
Format 233
Steps 233
Literature Reviews 234
Format 235
Steps 237
Critical Papers 238
Steps 238
Research Prospectuses 239
Format 239
Steps 241
Original Research Reports 242
Format 242
Steps 243
Summary 245
References 246
Exercises 246

CHAPTER 12 CONDUCTING A RESEARCH STUDY 247

Conceptualization 247
Computer Search 249
Model 250
Questionnaire 250
Procedure 253
Analysis 254
Epilogue 255
References 255

APPENDIX A APA STYLE BASICS 257

APPENDIX B SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ANTECEDENTS OF VCR USE 269

APPENDIX C GLOSSARY 277

SUBJECT INDEX 291

SOURCE INDEX 299

part one

Communication Research Strategies

The essence of strategy is careful planning. Accordingly, communication research requires a comprehensive plan of action. Part 1 focuses on conventional search procedures used to investigate communication topics.

In Chapter 1 we discuss the types of research projects students typically undertake and then describe the general structure of the communication discipline. Next, in Chapter 2 we outline search procedures and provide an orientation to library research. In Chapter 3 we explain what the Internet is and how to use it for communication research. In Chapter 4 we explain the strategies used to search computerized bibliographic databases and the World Wide Web.

Part 1 of the book, then, is an orientation to the process of communication research. We include end-of-chapter exercises to help you formulate a strategy—a plan of action—for completing research projects. If you are using this text in a college course, you will find it worthwhile to ask your instructor for feedback about how well you understand the research strategies by discussing your answers to the exercises.

chapter 1

Studying Communication

Why should we study communication? Those who do will tell you that their work is driven by a need to know more about human interaction and the communication process. Communication professionals need to develop skills for acquiring and using information throughout their professional lives.

Research is often defined as systematic inquiry into a subject. The key word in this definition, *systematic*, points to the need to examine topics methodically rather than to plunge haphazardly into sources. Two major goals in this book are to acquaint you with this step-by-step procedure of inquiry and to provide guidance for following these generally accepted principles and practices of research.

In this chapter we explain how communication students and professionals become involved in the research process. First, we explore the profession and how the discipline is organized. This will give you an idea of the interdisciplinary nature of communication and a sense of what interests communication researchers. Then we look at the types of projects that require systematic inquiry in the communication discipline.

THE COMMUNICATION DISCIPLINE

Communication is how people arrive at shared meanings through the interchange of messages. Although *communication* has been defined in a variety of ways, when we define it as the process through which meaning and social reality are created, many things become communication events. Political scientists, educators, business executives, linguists, poets, philosophers, scientists, historians, psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists—to name but a few—are concerned with communication within their specific areas of inquiry. It is little wonder that no other discipline of knowledge is quite as broad as communication.

Communication researchers examine the processes by which meanings are managed—in other words, how people structure and interpret messages and use language and other symbol systems in several contexts: interpersonal, group, organizational, public, and mass. Thus, the focus of communication inquiry is broad, and the contexts in which the communication process is examined are diverse and interrelated.

Communication is a time-honored and yet modern field of inquiry. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) devoted much thought to examining the constituent elements of *rhetoric*, or the available means of persuasion. From 1600 through the early 1900s, speech theorists focused on effective delivery of the spoken word. Early students of mass communication were intrigued by the effects of media-delivered messages. Contemporary communication researchers have also expanded their interests to interpersonal, group, and organizational communication contexts and to the processes that occur during communication. In examining the flow of information and the interchange of messages between individuals in a variety of contexts, researchers today are also probing the uses and effects of modern communication technologies in a world where societies and people are linked by instantaneous transmissions via satellites and computers.

Communication has a rich history, so rich that we couldn't do justice to it here. For more information on the history of the communication discipline, consult the following sources:

Benson, T. W. (Ed.). (1985). *Speech communication in the 20th century*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Cohen, H. (1994). *The history of speech communication: The emergence of a discipline, 1914–1945*. Annandale, VA: National Communication Association.

Crowley, D., & Heyer, P. (Eds.). (1991). *Communication in history: Technology, culture, society* (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.

Delia, J. G. (1987). Communication research: A history. In C. R. Berger & S. H. Chaffee (Eds.), *Handbook of communication science* (pp. 20–98). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Rogers, E. M. (1994). *A history of communication study: A biographical approach*. New York: Free Press.

Schramm, W. (1980). The beginnings of communication study in the United States. *Communication Yearbook, 4*, 73–82.

Schramm, W. (1997). *The beginnings of communication study in America: A personal memoir*. S. H. Chaffee & E. M. Rogers (Eds.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schramm, W. L. (1988). *The story of human communication: Cave painting to microchip*. New York: Harper & Row.

Because communication is studied in several allied disciplines, you may sometimes find it difficult to focus on one particular research topic and to find all the available literature about that topic. And, because communication is of interest to the social and behavioral sciences, the arts, and the humanities, many

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