

Chapter 6 Overview: Researching Your Subject

- Understanding the differences between academic and workplace research
- Understanding the research process
- Choosing appropriate research methods
- Conducting secondary research
- Conducting primary research

Understand the differences between academic and workplace research:

- In *academic research*, your goal is to find information that will help you answer a scholarly question.
- In *workplace research*, your goal is to find information that will help you answer a practical question, usually one that involves the organization for which you work.

The research process consists of 12 tasks:

- Analyze your audience.
- Analyze your purpose.
- Analyze your subject.
- Visualize the deliverable.
- Work out a schedule and a budget.

The research process consists of 12 tasks (cont.):

- Determine what information will need to be part of that deliverable.
- Determine what information you still need to acquire.
- Create questions you need to answer in your deliverable.

The research process consists of 12 tasks (cont.):

- Conduct secondary research.
- Conduct primary research.
- Evaluate your information.
- Do more research.

Ask questions to help choose appropriate research methods:

- What is the theory behind this process or technique?
- What is the history of this phenomenon?
- What techniques are being used now to solve this problem?
- How is a current situation expected to change?

Ask questions to help choose appropriate research methods (cont.):

- What products are available to perform a task or provide a service?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of competing products and services?
- Which product or service do experts recommend?
- What do our stakeholders think about a current or proposed product or service?

Ask questions to help choose appropriate research methods (cont.):

- What are the facts about how we do our jobs at this company?
- What can we learn about what caused a problem in our organization?
- What do our personnel think we should do about a situation?
- How well would this product or service work in our organization?

Follow three guidelines when researching a topic:

- Be persistent.
- Record your data carefully.
- Triangulate your research methods.

Know the four types of information media:

- print
- online databases
- websites
- social media

Know how to use six basic research tools:

- online catalogs
- reference works
- periodical indexes
- newspaper indexes
- abstract services
- government information

Understand these five forms of social media:

- discussion boards
- wikis
- blogs
- tagged content
- RSS feeds

Look for information that is . . .

- accurate
- unbiased
- comprehensive
- appropriately technical
- current
- clear

When evaluating print and online sources, examine these five factors:

- authorship
- publisher
- knowledge of the literature
- accuracy and verifiability of the information
- timeliness

Understand the seven techniques of primary research:

- analysis of social-media data
- observations and demonstrations
- inspections
- experiments
- field research
- interviews
- inquiries
- questionnaires

Conducting an experiment consists of four phases:

- establishing a hypothesis
- testing the hypothesis
- analyzing the data
- reporting the data

Field research is vulnerable to two common problems:

- the effect of the experiment on the behavior you are studying
- bias in the recording and analysis of the data

Consider three factors when choosing a person to interview:

- What questions do you want to answer?
- Who could provide the information you need?
- Is the person willing to be interviewed?

Prepare for the interview:

- Do your homework.
- Prepare good questions.
- Check your equipment.

You should go through four phases when conducting an interview:

- preparing for the interview
- beginning the interview
- conducting the interview
- concluding the interview

Begin the interview:

- Arrive on time.
- Thank the respondent.
- State the subject and purpose of the interview.
- State what you plan to do with the information.
- If you want to record the interview, ask permission.

Conduct the interview:

- Take notes.
- Start with prepared questions.
- Be prepared to ask follow-up questions.
- Be prepared to get the interview back on track.

Conclude the interview:

- Thank the respondent.
- Ask for a follow-up interview, if appropriate.
- Ask for permission to quote the respondent.

After the interview, do two tasks:

- Write down the important information while the interview is fresh in your mind.
- Send a brief thank-you note.

Questionnaires are vulnerable to three problems:

- Some of the questions will misfire.
- You won't obtain as many responses as you want.
- You cannot be sure the respondents are representative.

Using questionnaires effectively involves four tasks:

- Ask effective questions.
- Test the questionnaire.
- Administer the questionnaire.
- Present questionnaire data in your document.

Use these two suggestions for creating effective questions:

- Use unbiased language.
- Be specific.

Understand the six common types of questions in questionnaires:

- multiple choice
- Likert scale
- semantic differentials
- ranking
- short answer
- short essay