Unit- 3
Review of Literature

Introduction

Secondary sources of information are useful in exploratory research. The search may involve conceptual literature, trade literature or published statistics. The literature that is searched depends on the problem being addressed. In a literature search, the major emphasis is on the discovery of ideas and tentative explanations of the phenomenon.

In most cases, the exploration phase will begin with a literature search- a review of books as well as articles in journals or professional literature that relate to the problem. A literature search requires the use of library's online catalog and one or more bibliographic databases or indexes. Other reference materials will be incorporated in search strategy.

Literature review has five steps:

1. Define the management problem
2. Consult encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks and textbooks to identify key terms, people, or events relevant to management question.
3. Apply key terms, people, or events in searching indexes, bibliographies, and the web to identify specific secondary sources.
4. Locate and review specific secondary sources for relevance.
5. Evaluate the value of each source and its content.

Levels of information

In exploring the problem or topic, different types of information sources are to be considered. Information sources are generally categorized into three levels;

1. Primary sources
2. Secondary sources
3. Tertiary sources

1. Primary sources

Primary sources are original works of research or raw data without interpretation that represent an official opinion or position. Included among the primary sources are memos, letters, complete interviews or speeches. Primary sources are the most authoritative because the information has been filtered or interpreted by a second party. Internal sources of primary data include inventory records, personnel records, purchasing requisition forms, statistical process control charts etc.

2. Secondary sources

Secondary sources are interpretations of primary data. Encyclopedias, textbooks, handbooks, magazine and newspaper articles, and most newscasts are considered secondary information sources. All reference materials fall into this category. E.g. sales analysis summaries and investor annual reports are examples of secondary sources as they are compiled from a variety of primary sources. A firm searching for secondary sources can search internally or externally.

3. Tertiary sources

Tertiary sources may be an interpretation of a secondary source but generally are represented by indexes, bibliographies, and other finding aids. (E.g. Internet search engines).

Types of information sources

1. Indexes and bibliographies

Indexes and bibliographies are the mainstay of any library because they help to identify and locate a single book or journal article. The single most important bibliography in any library is its online catalog. There are many specialized indexes and bibliographies unique to business topics. These can be very useful in a literature search to find authors and titles of prior works on the topic of interest.

2. Dictionaries

There are many specialized business dictionaries that define words, terms, or jargon unique to a discipline. Most of these specialized dictionaries include in their word lists information on people, events, or organizations that shape the discipline. E.g. Dictionary of Business and Management. Information from dictionaries and glossaries may be used to identify key terms for a search of an online or printed database.

3. Encyclopedias

It is used to find background or historical information on a topic or to find names or terms that can enhance search results in other sources. They are helpful in identifying the experts in a field and the key writings on any topic.

4. Handbooks

A handbook is a collection of facts unique to a topic. It often includes statistics, directory information, a glossary of terms, and other data essential to a field. The best handbooks include source references for the facts they present.

5. Directories

Directories are used for finding names and addresses as well as other data. While many are available and useful in printed format, directories in digitized format that can be searched by certain characteristics or sorted and then downloaded are more useful.

Evaluating information sources

Researchers evaluate and select information sources based on five factors that can be applied to any type of source. They are;

1. Purpose
2. Scope
3. Authority
4. Audience
5. Format

1. Purpose

The purpose of the source is what the author is trying to accomplish. In general, the purpose may be to enlighten or to entertain. The questions to answer are;

- Why does the site exist?
- How evident is the purpose it is trying to convey?

- Does it achieve its purpose?
- How does its purpose affect the type and bias of information presented?

2. Scope

Scope is closely tied to the purpose of the source.

- What is the date of publication?
- What time period does these sources cover?
- How much of the topic is covered and to what depth?
- Is the material covered local, regional, national, or international?
- Is it selective or comprehensive?
- How much information is available?
- What information did you expect to find that was missing?
- Is the source is bibliographic, how comprehensive is it?
- If it is a bibliographical or a directory or a bibliography, what are the criteria for inclusion?

3. Authority

In any source, both the author and the publisher are indicators of the authority. The author and the author's credentials should be given both in printed and electronic sources. Foot notes should be provided when appropriate.

4. Audience

Audience is also an important factor in evaluating an information source and it is also tied to the purpose of the source. The audiences are students majoring in business and some are practicing managers. It tries to answer;

- Whom does the site cater to?
- What level of knowledge or experience is assumed?
- How does this intended audience affect the type and bias of the information?

5. Format

Format relate to how the information is presented and how easy it is to find a specific piece of information. In a printed source, the arrangement of information-alphabetical? hierarchical?- chronological?- has an impact on the retrieval of information. Indexes are usually essential. Do cross-references link one term to related terms? How are acronyms handled? Is the reference to an item? Table number? Page? How do type fonts or colour help to find information?

Searching bibliographic data base

In a bibliographic data base, each record is a bibliographic citation to a book or journal article. The process of searching bibliographic databases is;

1. Select a data base appropriate to the topic.
2. Construct a search query (search statement)
    - Review and evaluate the results
    - Modify the search query, if necessary.
3. Save valuable results of search
4. Retrieve articles not available in the database.
5. Supplement results with information from web sources.

1. Select a data base

A library's online catalog is a bibliographic database that will help identify books and media on a topic.

2. Construct the search query

Use the key words from the management question to prepare a query for the data base. Bibliographic databases, including the library's online catalog, all have similar search options, and a way to choose a subject from a browse list.

3. Save results of search

Make sure you keep the bibliographic information for your foot notes and bibliography. Most data bases offer the choice of marking the records and printing or downloading them.

4. Retrieve articles

For articles not available in full text, retrieval will normally require the additional step of searching the library's online catalog to determine if the desired issue is available and where it is located. Some current articles may be available on the web or via a fee-based service.

Searching the World Wide Web for information

The WWW is a vast of information, business and entertainment resource. There are no standard data base fields, no carefully defined subject hierarchies, no cross-references, no synonyms, and no selection criteria.

1. Select a search engine or directory

A search for specific information or for a specific site that help solve a management problem requires a great deal of skill and knowledge than browsing. Start by selecting one or more internet search engines. Web search engines vary considerably in the following ways;

- The types of Internet sources they cover (http, telnet, Usenet, ftp, etc)
- The way they search Web pages (every word? Titles or headers only?)
- The number of pages they include in their indexes.
- The search and presentation options they offer.
- The frequency with which they are updated.

2. Determine search options

Nearly all search engines have a Help button that will lead to information about the search protocols and options of that particular search engine.

3. Construct a search query and enter the search terms

The web is not a database nor does it have a controlled vocabulary. Be specific as possible, using the key words in management question. Determine synonyms, variant spellings, and broader and narrower terms, that will help retrieve the information required.

4. Save results of the search

If the information is found good, keep it for future reference so that it can be cited in proposal or refer to it later in the development of investigative questions. If the documents are not kept, we have to reconstruct the search.