CHAPTER – 2

Information Sources

2.1 Introduction- Literature of a Subject is its Foundation. It represents a record of achievements of human race. Literature is diverse, Complex and multilingual in nature. It is becoming more and more inter-disciplinary. It is growing at a fast pace. In sciences, it is almost doubling itself in every very few years according to some studies. In social Sciences, it is doubling at the rate of every eight to twelve years. Literature serves the informational needs of various kinds of Users. It forms source of Information. Traditionally Specking, information Sources would include primarily books, periodicals and newspapers. However, the number and forms of source are continuously increasing. In addition, unpublished sources are becoming increasingly important to scholars. Occasions will arise, especially in a special library of University library, when information would be required by a user without precondition about the form of document. In such a situation, what matters is the finding of information not the sources of information.

2.2 What is source- Source means the origin of something?

2.3 What is Information Source- An Information Source is a source of information for somebody, i.e. anything that might informs a person about something or provide knowledge to somebody. Information sources may be observations, people speeches, documents, pictures, organizations etc.

2.4 Types of information sources- Different epistemologies have different views regarding the importance of different kind of information
sources. Empiricism regards sense data as the ultimate information sources, while other epistemologies have different views (Kragh 1989)(44). The various types of information sources can be divided into two broad categories.

A- Documentary Sources

B- Non-Documentary Sources

Figure – 1

Types of Information Sources

2.41 Documentar y sources- These are generally published or recorded documents of knowledge. Documentary sources may be as under-:
2.41.1 **Primary Sources** - Primary sources of information are the first published records of original research and development or description of new application or new interpretation of an old theme or idea. There are original documents representing unfiltered original ideas.

These constitute the latest available information. A researcher producing new information can make it available to the particular community through the primary sources. Often, it may be the only source of information in existence. Primary sources are unorganized sources, which are rather difficult to use by them, the secondary sources helps us
to use these. These are important sources of information. A subject becomes a discipline in its own right when independent primary sources begin to be produced in that area. The rate of growth of a discipline to a large extent depends upon the amount of literature being produced in the form of primary sources reporting development in the concerned field.

Primary source is a term used in a number of disciplines to describe source material that is closest to the person, information, period or idea being studied.

In historiography, a primary source (also called original source) is an artifact, a document, a recording, or other source of information that was created at the time under study. If created by a human source then a source with direct personal knowledge of the events being described.

It serves as an original source of information about the topic. Similar definitions are used in library Science, and other areas of scholarship.

In journalism, a primary source can be a person with direct knowledge of a situation or a document created by such a person. Primary sources are distinguished from secondary sources, which cite, comment on, or build upon primary sources. Though the distinction is not a sharp one. “Primary and secondary are relative terms, with sources judged primary or secondary according to specific historical contexts and what is being studied.” (Kragh 1989)

For Example-:

- Books
- Periodicals
- Conference Papers
2.41.2 **Secondary Sources** Secondary sources of information are those which are either compiled from or refer to primary sources of information. The original information having been casually modified selected or reorganized so as to serve a definite purpose for group of users. Such sources contain information arranged and organized on the basis of some definite plan. These contain organized repackaged knowledge rather than new knowledge. Information given in primary sources is made available in a more convenient form. Due to their very
nature, secondary sources are more easily and widely available than primary sources. These not only provide digested information but also serve as bibliographical key to primary sources of information. The primary sources are the first to appear, these are followed by secondary sources. It is difficult to find information from primary sources directly. Therefore, one should consult the secondary sources in the first instance, which will lead one to specific primary sources.

**KINDS OF SECONDARY SOURCES**

“Bonn” has divided the secondary sources into three types which are as below

1. Index Type:
   (a) Index
   (b) Bibliography
   (c) Indexing periodicals
   (d) Abstracting Periodicals

2. Survey Type:
   (a) Review
   (b) Treatise
   (c) Monograph

3. Reference Type:
   (a) Encyclopedia
   (b) Dictionary
   (c) Handbook, Manual
   (d) Critical Tables
Important ones are Discussed below-

1. **Periodicals:** - All periodicals do not report original work. There are a number of periodicals which specialize in interpreting and providing opinions on developments reported in primary sources of information. Such periodicals may be considered secondary sources.


2. **Indexes:** An Index to a work contains an alphabetical list of names, topics, places, formulae, titles of any significant item referring to material presented in the main part of the work. Sometimes, these items may be arranged chronologically, geographically or in some other way. A well compiled index adds to usefulness of a work.


3. **Bibliographies:** A bibliography is an organized list of primary or other sources relating to a given subject or person. It is usually arranged alphabetically by author or chronologically or topic wise. It may be comprehensive or selective. Sometimes it may be provided with annotations. It may be published as a part of a larger work or as a separate work. The basic aim of a bibliography is to assist the users in locating the existence of or identifying a book or any other material which may be interest to him. A well prepared bibliography provides a definite coverage of documents over a period of time within specified limits. Thus, it also serves the purpose of retrospective searching of literature,

4. **Indexing Periodicals**—An Indexing Periodical is a regularly issued compilation of titles of articles that appear in current primary source journals. Generally, titles of new books, pamphlets, etc., are also included. An index to a publication contains an alphabetical list of names, topics, places, formulate, titles of any significant items referring to material presented in the main part of the work. These items are arranged chronologically, geographically, or in some other way. An indexing periodical is a regularly issued compilation of titles of articles that appear in current primary source journals, generally titles of new books, pamphlets, etc., are also included.


5. **Abstracting Periodicals**—Abstracts appear in different formats. The best known format for abstracting services is periodical. An abstracting periodical “is a regularly issued compilation of concise summaries of (i) significant articles (often in a very limited subject field) that appear in current primary sources journals and (ii) important new research monographs, reports, patents, and other primary source publication in that field.” *(Bonne, George S. 1971)*

    An Abstracting Periodical serves as an index, a tool for retrieval of information on a specific subject. However, indexing periodicals are earlier to appear than abstracting periodicals.

6. **Reviews (Survey Type)**—A review is a survey of the primary literature. It aims to digest and correlate the literature over a given period. It also indicates the development and trends in the field concerned. It may appear as a collection of papers on a regular basis (annual or quarterly or monthly) or in the form of an article in a periodical. A review provides
background information to a new problem in a suitable form and serves as a key to literature. List of references given in a review can serve as first rate bibliography of the concerned subject for a period covered by it,

    e.g. Annual review of biochemistry (1932) Palo Alto: Annual Reviews. Annual.

7. **Reference Books** (also considered tertiary) - Reference works, which contain the desired information itself, are considered secondary sources of information. These include encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, tables, formularies etc. these form an important part of secondary sources of information. The sources of ready reference books are as follows:-:

(a) **Dictionaries:** A dictionary is a book, which deals with words of a language or of some special subjects, authors, etc. Thus a dictionary is a wordbook. Although a dictionary is supposed to deal with words but often it may go beyond this.


(b) **Encyclopedias** (also considered tertiary): An encyclopedia is a book giving information on all branches of knowledge or a specific subject. It is an ideal book, which deals with concepts. An encyclopedia is a storehouse of knowledge giving all information of significance. However, it is best used for finding answers to background questions related to general information and self-education. One often turns to encyclopedias for one’s everyday information requirements. This is also true of scientists and technologists.

(c) **Handbook:** A handbook is a compilation of miscellaneous information in a compact and handy form. It contains data, procedures, principles, including tables, graphs, diagrams and illustrations. Scientists and technologists use handbooks in their fields rather frequently.

  e.g. *Britain, (1948/49) an official handbook.* London: stationary office, annual.

(d) **Tables** - Many of the handbooks contain data in the form of tables. Some of the handbooks devote substantial portion of the work to tables as compared with text. Tables are convenient form to present data. There are extremely useful in Science.


(e) **Manuals:** In common practice, a manual is an instruction book, which instructs how to do something by means of specific and clear directions.


(f) **Magazine and newspaper articles (this distinction varies by discipline):** A news article is an article Published in a print of Internet news medium such as a newspaper, newsletter news magazine, news oriented website, or article directory that discusses current or recent news of either general interest (i.e. daily newspapers) or on a specific topic (i.e. political or trade news magazines, club newsletters, or technology news websites).

(8) **Text Books (other than fiction and autobiography):** A textbook is a book of instruction. Its Primary aim is not to impart information about a specific subject but to enable one to develop proper
understanding of the subject. Presentation is extremely important and it is prepared to serve a particular level of readership. It cannot be comprehensive. Often presentation is colorful and attractive, giving plenty of illustrations and diagrams. A good textbook takes into consideration the method of teaching and level of readership. It is revised keeping in view new developments and changing methodology of teaching. There is a difference of opinion about the place of text books as tertiary sources.

  e.g. Text Book of Crop Production, by P.C. Rahaja, etc Bombay,

(9) **Translations**: Translations are an important part of secondary sources. Their characteristics are the same as those of primary or secondary or tertiary sources from which these are translated. Many of the authors of research papers prefer to cite original sources rather than translations.

(10) **Treatises**: A Treatise is a comprehensive compilation or summary of information on a subject. A treatise on a subject provides enough information to a person to acquire basic knowledge, so essential for carrying out advanced research. It also provides facts, along with discussion. The fact may include physical constants methods of preparation and purification of compounds etc. Usually, it is limited to a broad field. Due to the very nature, these become out of date within a short period of time.


(11) **Monographs**- A Monograph is a short treatise on a specific subject. A monograph and treaties serve the same purposes with the difference
that a monograph is an attempt on a limited scale. Very often a monograph may be brought out as a part of series.


(12) **Biographical words** - A biography is a description or account of someone’s life and the times, which is usually published in the form of a book or an essay, or in some other form, such as a film. An autobiography (auto meaning “self”, giving “self-biography”) is a biography of a person’s life written or told by that same person. A biography is more than a list of impersonal facts (education, work, relationship and death), it also portrays the subject’s experience of those events. Unlike a profile or curriculum vitae (resume), a biography presents the subject’s story, highlighting various aspects of his or her life, including intimate details of experiences, and may include as analysis of the subject’s personality.

(13) **Literary criticism** – It is the study, evaluation and interpretation of literature. Modern Literary criticism is often informed by literary theory, which is the philosophical discussion of its methods and goals. Though the two activities are closely related, literary critics are not always, and have not always been, theorists.

2.41.3 **Tertiary Sources**: This is the most problematic category of all. However, people rarely expected to differentiate between secondary and tertiary sources. Materials in which the information from secondary sources has been digested- reformatted and condensed, to put it into a convenient, easy to read form. Sources which are once removed in time
from secondary sources and works which index, organize and compile citations to, and show you how to use, secondary sources.

Tertiary sources of information contain information distilled and collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary function of tertiary sources of information is to aid the searcher of information in the use of primary and secondary sources of information. Most of these sources do not contain subject knowledge. Due to increase in literature, tertiary sources are becoming increasingly important. Out of various kinds of sources, tertiary sources are the last to appear.

**Types:**
1. Bibliography of Bibliographies
2. Directories and yearbooks
3. Guide to literature
4. List of research in progress

2.42 - **Non-documentary sources** - Non documentary sources of information form a substantial part of communication especially in science and technology. User’s studies have underlined importance of such sources. These sources provide information which other sources do not.

**Types** - There is two kinds of sources:-
1. Formal Sources:
   - Research Organization
   - Societies
   - Industries
   - Govt. deptt.
   - Universities
   - Consultants
(2) Informal Sources
- Conversation with colleges
- Visitors
- Attendance at Professional Meetings.

2.5 Conclusions- The above categorization is based on the characteristics of the documents. Primary sources are more current and accurate than secondary and tertiary. In searching for Information, a researcher usually starts with secondary and tertiary sources and ends the search with primary sources. Secondary and tertiary sources contain information in organized form and these serve as guides or indicators to detailed contents of primary literature. With increasing amount of literature being produced, it is becoming almost impossible to use primary sources directly for searching of information. A scholar would also not be able to keep himself up to date and well informed in his field of specialization without the aid of secondary and tertiary sources. This goes to show the importance of there sources of information.
References


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