Literature Searching for Research

Lambeth Research Forum
14th February 2002

Catherine Ebenezer
Multidisciplinary Library, Reay House

South London and Maudsley NHS Trust
2002
Purposes of literature searching

- Identify extent and quality of work already carried out in the subject area
- Identify key contacts
- Avoid duplication!
Types of literature: 1

Primary literature

♦ Preprints
♦ Conference proceedings
♦ Informally published reports ("grey literature")
♦ Journal articles
Types of literature: 2

Secondary literature

- Reviews
- Books: edited collections
- Books: monographs/surveys
More on “grey literature”…

- Theses
- Reports
- Official publications (not Stationery Office)
- Conference proceedings
Sources for literature searching: 1

Databases of articles and books

*Bibliographic*  e.g. MEDLINE, PsycINFO etc.

*Full text*  e.g. PsycArticles, Cochrane Database

Library catalogues (COPAC, British Library, South Thames Libraries etc.)

Research databases

  e.g. National Research Register, MRC (UK), CRISP (USA)
Sources for literature searching: 2

...not forgetting....

♦ Handsearching of core journals
♦ Reference lists/ Footnote chasing
♦ Printed bibliographies
♦ World Wide Web search engines (e.g. Google)
♦ Picking colleagues’ brains (such as they are...)
Characteristics of the literature

Mental health literature is problematic:

- "Poorly controlled"
- Scattered across many different databases
- None is comprehensive
- All need to be looked at in a comprehensive search

Bibliographic databases: 1

MEDLINE

- 4000+ journals indexed
- Produced by National Library of Medicine (USA)
- Available free at [http://www.pubmed.gov](http://www.pubmed.gov)
- European journals not particularly well covered
- Mental health coverage not especially good
- Strong on acute medical specialities
Psychological Abstracts
(PsycINFO, PsycLIT, ClinPsyc-clinical subset)
- Produced by American Psychological Association
- A “cash cow”—not available anywhere free, but short-term access via WWW can be purchased
- Covers all aspects of psychology
- Comprehensive but some US bias
Bibliographic databases: 3

EMBASE Psychiatry

- European commercial product
- Comprehensive psychiatry coverage
- Strong on pharmacology and drug therapy issues
- Thesaurus terms very “old-fashioned”
- First resort!
Bibliographic databases: 4

CINAHL

*v Covers nursing, PAMs, health management
*v Recent records include references
*v US bias but increasingly strong coverage of UK and Australasian literature
*v Good for psychiatric nursing
*v Some journals very obscure
Bibliographic databases: 5

AMED: Allied and Complementary Medicine

- Produced in UK by British Library
- Aims to complement MEDLINE
- Best source of UK PAMs literature
Bibliographic databases: 6

Cochrane Library
- Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
- NHS Economic Evaluations Database
- NHS CRD Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness
- Medical Editors’ Trials Amnesty
- HTA Database
Bibliographic databases: 7

Citation indexes

♦ Identify a significant piece of published research
♦ Find out who has cited it in later work

► SciSearch
► Social SciSearch (includes nursing)
Bibliographic databases: 8

Others....

♦ ChildData (child health and welfare)
♦ ASSIA (applied social sciences)
♦ caredata (social work)
♦ ENB database (nursing)
♦ HMIC (health management)

See http://slamlibrary.net for these and more....
Bibliographic databases: 9

...lots of web-accessible databases on specialist areas, e.g.:

- BiblioSleep: sleep
- HealthPromis: health promotion
- PsycheMatters: psychotherapy
- Aegis AIDS-HIV
- NARIC: disability
- PIE: mental health policy
- BEI: education
- ETOH: alcohol abuse
- CHID: public health
- ERIC: education
- SPIN: science policy
- JourLit/BookRev: psychoanalysis

...more at [http://www.leidenuniv.nl/ub/biv/freebase.htm](http://www.leidenuniv.nl/ub/biv/freebase.htm)
Citation styles: 1

♦ Harvard style – social sciences

♦ Vancouver style – biomedicine

...more on citation styles at http://slamlibrary.xiy.net
Citation styles: 2

Citing electronic sources

Styles less established than for citing printed formats--

--need to include:

♦ Bibliographic details (as applicable): author, title, etc.

♦ URL

♦ Date downloaded

Research information: 1

- Research in progress
- Findings/outcomes
- Research funding and opportunities
Research information: 2

♦ National Health Service R&D pages
Information on all aspects of NHS research: includes
National Research Register: ongoing and recently completed research projects funded by or of interest to the NHS
Research Findings Electronic Register (ReFeR): findings of completed NHS research
Health Technology Assessment (HTA) programme monographs

♦ R&D Info
http://www.rdinfo.org.uk
A digest of health-related funding and training opportunities
Research information: 3

♦ Current Controlled Trials: mRCT
A register of randomised controlled trials currently in progress
http://www.controlled-trials.com/
Research information: 4

Medical research charities

♦ Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC)
  http://www.amrc.org.uk/
  Links to individual charities, funding guide

♦ WISDOM database of biomedical research funding
  http://wisdom.wellcome.ac.uk/wisdom/fundhome.html
  Information on 400+ funding schemes offered by UK organisations supporting biomedical research
Research information: 5

Higher education 1

Research councils:

- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- Medical Research Council (MRC)

NEST database:
provides information on current research funded by the UK research councils:

http://www.nest.ac.uk/research_g.html
Research information: 6

Higher education 2

HERO research zone:
Information on research opportunities and funding within UK higher education

http://www.hero.ac.uk/research/
Further training: 1

Online resources

- Literature searching for research (Bath)
  http://www.bath.ac.uk/Departments/PostMed/rdsu/hints_search.htm

- Information retrieval skills for medicine (Leicester)
  http://www.le.ac.uk/library/teach/irsm/irsm1.html

- Resource Discovery Network online tutorials:
  psychology, social work, medicine, social policy, social research methods
  http://www.vts.rdn.ac.uk
Further training: 2

NHS and academic libraries

♦ Reay House library
  provides training in database searching or assistance with literature searches; group sessions can be organised

♦ HealthFirst
  provides training in database searching or assistance with literature searches, basic and advanced internet searching

♦ King’s College London health sciences libraries
  provides hands-on workshops on searching bibliographic databases and electronic journals
Further training: 3

External training providers 1

♦ Library Association
  runs a variety of courses on information searching in health care
  (formerly these were provided by the British Library)
  http://www.la-hq.org.uk

♦ BMA Library
  runs workshops on MEDLINE
  http://library.bma.org.uk/
Further training: 4

External training providers 2

Systematic Reviews Training Unit (UCL)
Offers training and short courses in systematic review methodology for health professionals
http://www.ich.ucl.ac.uk/srtu/

NHS CRD
Provide training in the use of the Cochrane Library for research coordinators, clinical audit and clinical governance staff, and librarians
http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/cochlib.htm