Step 5

Finding library materials: iFind

iFind is the main way to search resources provided by Swansea University Library. Get to iFind from the library home page, your MyUni page, or http://ifind.swan.ac.uk

Use the Books & more search in iFind to locate physical stock held within the library, which includes books, journals, DVDs and videos. You can also use iFind to locate online resources such as e-books, online journals/articles and databases.

How do I decide which books to read?
Between all of our libraries there are over 890,000 books to choose from! So, how do you decide which books are right for you?

iFind Reading
The first place to start is the reading list for your module. This will be made available to you in your module handbook, and online in the reading list section of blackboard. Here you will be linked to the reading in iFind.

Going beyond your reading list
At university you are expected to read around your subject and find relevant material that is not on your reading list. In short, it is down to you to evaluate a book, but here are a few things to look for…

- **Scope** - What is the purpose of the book - education, advertising, entertainment?
- **Breadth** - What aspects of the subject are covered? Is the book focused on a narrow area or does it include related topics?
- **Depth** - What is the level of detail provided about the subject? This may depend on the kind of audience for which the resource has been designed. The book could be aimed at A Level, undergraduate or postgraduate students for example.
- **Content** - Is the information fact or opinion?
- **Sources** - Are sources within the book listed so they can be verified?
Locating items in the Library
You can find Floor Plans of the libraries, which are useful to help you locate books on the shelves. A copy of the maps for each floor can be obtained from the Information Desk.

Borrowing items

You can find videos showing how to find, issue, and return library books here [http://www.swansea.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/videotutorials/](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/videotutorials/).

As an undergraduate student at Swansea University, you may borrow up to 15 items. Postgraduates may borrow 30 items. Full details regarding borrowing entitlements are available at [http://www.swansea.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/borrowing/](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/borrowing/).

Inter-library loans

If we don’t have a book that you want, it may be possible to acquire it via the ISS Document Supply service. You can get access to a wide range of material not held by the Library. Books are generally supplied on loan, whilst photocopies of journal articles are provided for you to keep. More information about the Document Supply service can be found at [http://www.swansea.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/documentsupply/](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/documentsupply/).

Buying books

You might consider buying copies of your key texts. John Smiths ([http://www.johnsmith.co.uk/swansea](http://www.johnsmith.co.uk/swansea)) should stock copies of books on reading lists. Alternatively, you may be able to find second-hand copies online, in charity shops.

Effective reading and taking notes

You may have already scanned through some of your material when you selected it but now you will want to read it in more depth, to take notes or even discard it from your research if you realise it is not as useful as you originally thought.

This stage can seem long and sometimes frustrating and de-motivating, but there are techniques that will help you to do this effectively.

Effective reading
To read effectively you will need to concentrate and develop your understanding of the material. Also, because of the amount of material you will have to examine it will help if you try to increase your speed. Additionally it may help if you ask yourself the following questions.

- What do I already know?
- How will I apply this to my assignment?
- What new things do I want to learn?
- Who has written this, what are they trying to say and to whom?

Effective reading will also help with effective note taking. Try the following process:

- survey the chapter or article, note the title and subheadings, this will give you some idea of what it is about
- question the author’s main points
- read, with the intention of answering your question
- repeat in your own words every couple of pages what you have read
- go back and review a chapter once you have read it

This will also help you to select appropriate material, so do not be afraid to discard any material that you think is irrelevant.

Note Taking

Note taking helps to record what you have read and should also help you to remember what you have read. For an assignment your notes should be accurate and detailed and should help you to structure your assignment. Use your plan to guide you with your note taking, identify and record the main points and check your understanding of any words or concepts that you are unfamiliar with.

Try to structure your notes in a way that will assist you with writing your assignment. The most common types of note taking are:

- **Linear**: where you use key words and phrases, for example, a heading is a key word or phrase and this is followed by bullet points or numbered points which give more detail
- **Patterns**: where arrows/circles/lines connect key words and phrases, making a spreading pattern e.g. mind mapping, diagrams
- **Visual information**: where it is difficult to record visual information in words, you may choose to make a sketch, copy the image or use an accurate reference so you can go back to it.

There are no set rules on how to structure your notes, and finding a method that best suits you is important, you may even choose to use a combination of the methods listed above.
Selecting what to note can be the most difficult task, your effective reading skills should help you with this, but also look at how you want to structure your assignment and try to answer the following:

- What is the argument I am trying to make?
- What evidence do I need to support my argument?
- What facts do I need to include and what is irrelevant?

As you are going along, make sure you note the source of your information, this is especially important if you are going to include some quotes e.g.:

- **Journal**: page number, article title, author and journal title, volume, number, date
- **Book**: page number, chapter title, author and book title and author/editor, publisher location and date

If you do this whilst you are note taking your task will be far easier, as trying to relocate references once you start writing your assignment can be extremely frustrating and it may feel like you are starting your research all over again! More detailed guidance on different types of referencing is included in Step 8.

Also, try and store your notes in an organised way, for example in a file, on your computer or in a notebook. It may also be useful if you date your notes.

**Checklist**

You can use this checklist to help you ensure you have completed the steps needed to understand how to undertake the research for your assignment effectively.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Have I familiarised myself with iFind?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have I made a note of all the resources I used so that I can create a full bibliography for my assignment</td>
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*Checklist 1*

You can also download a Word version of this checklist if you want to keep a record of it.

**Download:** Checklist - step 5

(Microsoft Word document)