Step 3. Information Sources

What types of information sources are there and where can you find them? Not all information is suitable for all purposes. Sometimes you want to know what the latest developments in your field are, other times you need figures to support your report.

All this information can be found in various sources. There are sources of information with only company information, but also sources with newspaper articles.

Before you start searching, it is therefore good to have an idea of the different types of information and associated sources. To help you on your way, the information is classified in three ways.

- Form
- Level
- Content

Lean Library

Saxion Library has an extension on its website - Lean Library - which gives you simple and quick access to online information sources (databases and e-journals), as well as to articles in open access. You can download this browser extension for free. After you have installed the browser extension, select 'Saxion Library' and the extension is ready for use!

The Lean Library browser extension works as follows: if you visit a website licensed by the library, you will receive a pop-up with a message. You have to click once to access the site through the library. The browser extension shows an icon in the bookmarks bar. This works more or less like a traffic light. If the icon is green, you are logged in. If you want to use an article that doesn't seem to be accessible, Lean Library will look for an open access version of the article.

Form

Full text information

Sources with full text information allow you to read and search through complete publications. By reading the abstract, you can quickly see whether a publication is relevant to you. Research articles or texts that require a lot of time and money are usually not freely accessible. But there are more and more exceptions, see [Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)](#).

Saxion University of Applied Sciences has obtained licences for a large number of databases. Full text articles can be found in databases such as [Science Direct](#) and [SAGE Premier](#).

Bibliographical information

Bibliographical sources contain references to and information about publications, such as:

- Title
- Author
- Publisher
- Year of publication
- Reference to the site
- Summary (abstract)

It is worth looking at this information as well. It is often indicated where you can find the full text version, for example in a library. Always check first whether a database contains full text information, just bibliographic information or both.

An example of a source with bibliographic information is a catalogue, such as the [Saxion Library catalogue](#).

It contains references to publications and information about the location. Sometimes the Saxion catalogue links you directly to a full text file, for example an e-book or a PDF file.

Level

Professional information

Professional information is specialist information in a particular field. The content focuses on practical applications and is written for professional practice. The use of language varies from simple to complex, but is always focused on the professional field.

Examples of subject-specific journals are Chemical Engineering or Electronics World. You can also use subject-specific databases such as Cinahl, IEEE or Emerald Tourism & Hospitality.

Scientific information

Scientific information is published in scientific journals or books, often in English. The text has always undergone a quality test in which two or more colleagues from the same field have checked the text. This is called peer review.

A scientific article is structured according to the same structure:

- Research question
- Theoretical framework
- Method of investigation
- Result
- Conclusion

A scientific publication is also provided with a bibliography (see step 6: Processing sources).

There are various databases with scientific and professional information. These may relate to a specific discipline, such as PubMed Central (PMC), or they may be multidisciplinary, such as ScienceDirect. There are also freely accessible websites with scientific information, see NARCIS.

In addition to scientific information, there is also popular scientific information. This information is written for people who are not specialised in the field. Think of magazines such as Time or Newsweek.

Content

Up-to-date information

Up-to-date information is a response to recent developments and is intended to keep abreast of what is currently happening in a particular area of expertise. This information can be found in newspapers, magazine articles and on websites. It is important that you pay attention to the reliability (see step 5: Selecting information).

Background information

It is important to know exactly what a discipline is and what relevant concepts and theories mean. This is background information that can be found in (hand)books. Knowledge of a subject makes the search process easier (see step 1: Research question, orientation).

Books are increasingly available in digital form. You can search a database with e-books, such as the [Ebsco eBook collection](#).

Factual information

Sometimes it is only necessary to know facts, for example as a supplement to your report. This can be data about a company, statistical data or concrete facts. You will find this information in databases, encyclopedias and dictionaries.

A number of databases contain specific, factual information. [CountryReports](#) contains cultural, historical and statistical information about a country. An encyclopedia, such as Wikipedia, can be a good start.

Research results

Research results can be results of experiments, but also descriptions, theoretical calculations, models and computer simulations and reports of practical applications. The results should be objective and independent.

Research results are not only included in reports or dissertations, but also in scientific journal articles. These can be found in databases such as [ScienceDirect](#) and [Pubmed Central (PMC)](#).