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information skills for life

## **UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY LIBRARY: CITATION CHAINING: HOW TO FIND MORE INFORMATION FROM ONE SOURCE**

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### **Learning outcomes**

After completing this learning tool, you should be able to:

- Understand and use citation chaining (both backwards and forwards) to find more useful resources, starting from just one good resource.
- Understand and use citation databases such as Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar to:
  - Backwards chain to find articles cited in your starting resource
  - Forwards chain to find articles that cite your starting resource

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## I'VE ONLY FOUND ONE GOOD ARTICLE FOR MY ASSIGNMENT, HOW CAN I FIND MORE RESOURCES?

You can use *citation chaining* to find more useful resources. Citation chaining is the process by which you use one good information source, such as an article relevant to your topic, and of a good scholarly nature (see Scholarly vs. non scholarly resources), as a starting point for finding more useful resources.

**Citation chaining can be separated into two distinct processes:**

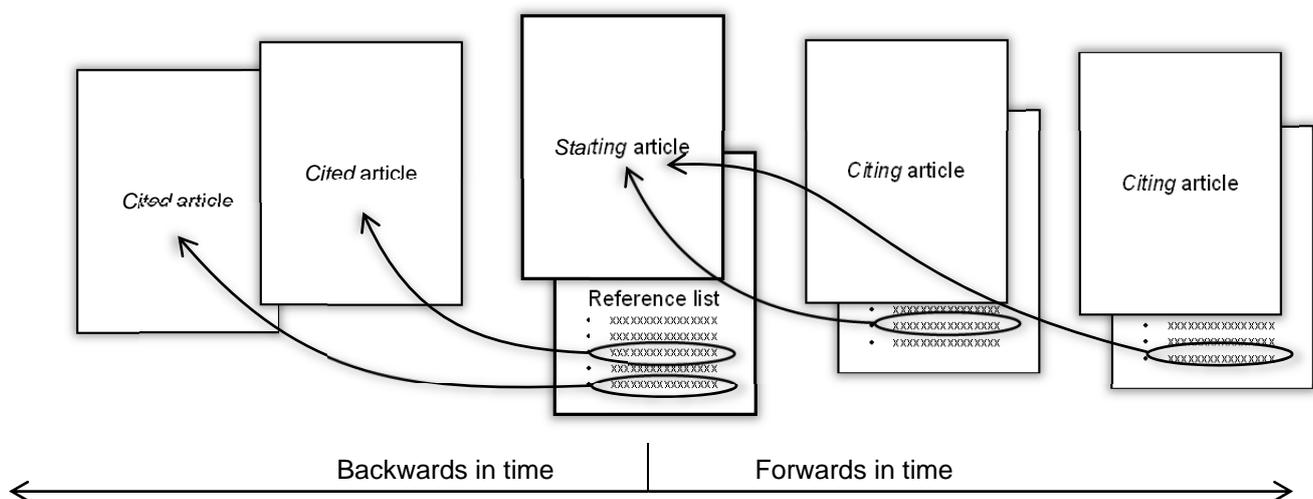
- Backwards chaining
- Forwards chaining

### BACKWARDS CHAINING

Backwards chaining is the process of looking at the reference list of a good source of information and identifying further useful resources to locate and read. Resources cited in a piece of research that you've found relevant to your research, will often be similar in nature because the author of the piece you've found has used them in their own research. Backwards chaining is a way of looking backwards in time, to research written prior to the publication of your starting resource, and can be useful to tracing the development of an idea. Backwards chaining can be performed manually by searching for the potentially useful resources using the catalogue for books or journals, or appropriate databases for articles. You can also use databases to find resources located in your starting resource's bibliography (see 'using databases to backwards and forwards chain' below).

### FORWARDS CHAINING

Forwards chaining is the process of searching for resources that have cited your starting resource. To forwards chain, you need to use a citation database such as Web of Science, Scopus or Google Scholar which will do the forwards chaining process for you (see 'using databases to backwards and forwards chain' below). Forwards chaining is a way of looking forwards in time, to research that has cited your starting resource in their reference list/s. Forwards chaining can be a way of tracing the ongoing development of an idea.



### USING DATABASES TO BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS CHAIN

You can use databases such as Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar to backwards and forwards chain from a starting article. First, find your starting article in one of the databases listed. Once you have located your article, look for terms such as 'References' and 'Bibliography' to see the articles referred to in your starting paper (backwards chaining), and look for terms like 'Times Cited', 'Cited By', 'Citations' to see the articles that have referred to your starting article (forwards chaining). In Web of Science, you can choose to see a visual map of citations (backwards, forwards or both) by clicking on the 'Citation map' link.

### WHAT IF I CAN'T FIND OTHER ARTICLES THAT HAVE CITED MY ARTICLE?

Not all articles have been referenced in other papers – this is particularly true of very recent research. Furthermore, not all articles will be included in databases that provide forwards chaining functions. To find more research, do a topic search in an appropriate database.