GOVT 2991 Political Analysis
Library Research Skills

Aims of the class:

- Demonstrate how to find Resources on your topic in the Library’s collections and through Online Resources.

- Identify Primary and Secondary Sources

- Demonstrate how to find
  - Statistical Data
  - News Sources
  - Opinion Polls & Election Data
  - Government Documents
  - Policy Documents
  - Books in Library Catalogue

- Discuss the search strategies needed when searching for articles and numerical data.
Primary and secondary sources

Primary sources [Slide 3]

Primary sources provide a first hand account of an event or time period. Often these sources are created at the time when the events are occurring but they can also include autobiographies, memoirs or oral histories that were recorded later.

Within the Social Sciences these sources differ from original documents used in historical research. Primary sources for the social sciences are any articles or papers which describe experiments or studies conducted by researchers and are written by the researchers themselves.

Characteristics to look for: [Slide 4]

• The researchers explain their methods of research, as well as the results.
• Primary source articles often include the following subheadings: methods, results, and discussion.
• Article abstracts often indicate if the article is an actual study or merely a review.
• Words used in the article, such as “this study” or “in our study, we measured” will indicate the nature of the article.
• Numerical data sets such as census figures, opinion polls, surveys or interview transcripts may also be considered primary sources.

Use search terms such as:

• diaries
• autobiographies (biographies)
• correspondence
• interviews
• manuscripts
• speeches
• oral histories
• government documents

Secondary sources [Slide 5]

Secondary sources offer an analysis or a restatement of primary sources. They often attempt to describe or explain primary sources and involve generalisation, synthesis, interpretation, commentary or evaluation.

Some secondary sources not only analyse primary sources, but use them to argue a point or to persuade the reader to hold a certain opinion.

Examples of secondary sources include:

• dictionaries
• encyclopedias
• textbooks
• books and articles that interpret or review research works
• biographies
• dissertations

Ideas on Where to Find Primary Sources: [Slide 6]

• Autobiographies - Use Library catalogue – Include “biography’ in search as our catalogue does not use the subheading Autobiography
• **Media Reports** - Use Library “Databases & Electronic Resources” webpage (Factiva, Proquest ANZ newsStand, & Capital Monitor)

• **Statistical Reports** - Use Library “Databases & Electronic Resources” webpage (ABS)

• **Opinion Poll data and Election results** - Use Library “Subject Guides – Australian Government Reports”

• **Parliamentary debates & Speeches** - Use Library “Subject Guides – Australian Government Reports”

**In Summary** [Slide 7]
The following Library sites will be useful for finding this information

- Databases and Electronic Resources   http://www.library.usyd.edu.au/databases/
  - Government and International Relations
  - News Services
  - Social Science Statistics
- Subject Guides  http://libguides.library.usyd.edu.au/
  - Government Documents - Australia
- Statistics – Australian
  - Policy Studies

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**Finding Statistical Data** [Slide 8]

There are a number of ways of finding statistical data. The library subscribes to a number of Statistical databases both Australian and International. To find these use

Databases and Electronic Resources Page – Social Science Statistics

This page will allow you to see a range of databases providing statistical information, both Australian and International. For Australian Statistics you can also got to the Subject guide – Statistics Australian

A number of these databases will require you to register to be approved for access to this material. Do not leave this to the last minute or you may find yourself in trouble. Approval may take about 48 hours or more. You will need to use your Uni of Sydney emails address or your registration will be immediately rejected

- Australian Bureau of Statistics
  - Australia’s official statistical organisation. Freely available data for social, health, economic and demographic research and census data for 1996 - 2006. Links to other statistical agencies via the ABS subject themes page.
  - Access ABS material from the Sydney Uni website as we have a subscription to the data.

- ABS TableBuilder
This will allow you to access survey data via the tablebuilder software without having to go through the strict approval process required for ABS Microdata results. There are two type of Tablebuilder access. They are

- **Census** - Allows you to create your own tables of Census data on a range of topics such as, age, education, housing, income, transport, religion, ethnicity, occupation and more.
- **Survey** – An online tool for creating tables and graphs from ABS Survey data

They will allow you to build tables and graphs of the statistical information provided by ABS. You will need to register to access this information. This is a 2 step process. 1st you register and then when the approval is given you login and select the datasets you wish to use and approval for these datasets will be given.

- **ADA : Australian Data Archive (1977 - present) – Formerly ASSDA**
  - Over 2,000 data sets from Australian and non-Australian studies. Data available for research includes census data, opinion polls, electoral studies, education, youth studies, social welfare and social attitudes. Access information is available from the ADA website, and user guides are provided
  - There are 3 levels of data available General, Restricted and Special Access. You will only be able to use information at the General level. As class assessment is not usually sufficient to receive the higher level approval needed for restricted or Special access

- **ICPSR: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICSPRI) (1977 - present)**
  - ICPSR maintains and provides access to an archive of social science data for research and instruction. Access to data via ADA. Information on data sets available from ICPSR website.
  - Has the same restrictions as ADA but approval is coming from Overseas (United States) and you may need to complete a detailed form for access so allow yourself plenty of time.

- **OECD iLibrary**
  - Full-text for all OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) publications, including documents, periodicals and statistical databases. You can use this database to build your own statistical tables

- **World Bank Open Data (1960 -)**
  - Includes World Bank Development Indicators: 900 indicators organised in six sections: World View, People, Environment, Economy, States and Markets, and Global Links. Click Data Catalog > Databank.

- **IMF eLibrary Data** – formerly IFS : International Financial Statistics (1945 - present)
  Time series database produced by the International Monetary Fund, providing statistics for a wide range of economic and financial indicators. **Access to International Financial Statistics package only**
Finding News Databases

There are a number of ways of finding media reports via the library also. Again the library subscribes to a number of news databases providing access to print, web and broadcast media.

Databases and Electronic Resources Page
- Government & International Relations
  - News Services

❖ Factiva

❖ Proquest Newsstand databases

❖ TVNews via Informit Online (September 2007 - present)
  ➢ TVNews indexes Australian television news, current affairs programs, and selected documentaries from the free-to-air networks and links to the video files.

❖ Capital Monitor
  ➢ Parliamentary and legal information from federal and selected state sources. Monitors Bills, Acts, High Court and Tax rulings, elections and budgets. Tracks information by selected popular topics.

Finding Opinion Polls and Election Results

Use the Library Subject Guides to find links to information

❖ Statistics Australia – Has a page on Opinion Poll Data

❖ Media & Communications (Journalists Toolkit) also has information on Opinion Polls including links to some international sites

❖ Government Documents – Australia
  ➢ Has a page on Elections and Electoral Information including
    ▪ The Australian election portal which provides an entry point to national, state and territory electoral websites.
    ▪ Online & Print References to election related sites and material
Finding Government Documents  

There are a number of ways of finding Government Documents. The library has a subject guide to direct you to sites containing government Documents

The Following Library Subject Guides are useful


You may also find Information via

- Other Government Entry Points - www.usa.gov ; www.gov.uk ; www.europa.eu
- Parlinfo Search [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/search.w3p;adv=yes]

You can use these sites to locate full text government documents such as party policy documents, press releases, media statements, parliamentary speeches, parliamentary debates (Hansard), bills, committee reports tabled papers etc

Parliamentary Debates:  

- Go to the Government Documents Australia subject guide, select Debates from the Parliamentary Publications Tab
  - The verbatim record of parliamentary debates published by the various parliaments is commonly called Hansard. Included are answers to questions, texts or petitions, and the occasional report which has been incorporated in Hansard without being read in parliament.

Parliamentary Reports

These are documents which have been presented to parliament and ordered to be printed. They include annual reports of executive departments, reports of commissions, committees, and any other body required to report to parliament. The papers are numbered consecutively. These are usually in two forms.

- Papers tabled in parliament:
  - Go to the Government Documents Australia subject guide, select Parliamentary Reports from the Parliamentary Publications Tab

- Papers produced by government agencies:
  - Go to the web site of the relevant government agency
  - Check their menu or page for links to publications
  - Search web using search engine such as Google – can limit by domain type such as .gov.au

Parliamentary Bills and Acts  

[Slide 13]
Federal Parliament information on Bills and Acts can be found by searching Parlinfo.

For State Information look at the State Government Entry points, which for each state are usually www.state.gov.au

The Capital Monitor Database can provide access to Parliamentary and Legal information from federal and selected State Parliaments. Includes extracts from debates, press releases, case information, policy and legislative documents.

Legislation information can also be found by searching on free Websites such as AustLII (The Australasian Legal Information Institute (AustLII) provides free internet access to Australasian legal materials.)

Finding Policy Documents  [Slide 14]

Parliaments enact laws, debate policy and propose legislation, they review, report on and investigate many policy issues through parliamentary committees. Parliamentary debates, reports from committees, bills digests may all provide information on significant changes in policy that may have impact on the Australian policy framework. Federal state and territory parliaments all disseminate a range of information via their websites and provide access to searchable databases of parliamentary documents.

The Parliamentary Library publishes research briefs and background papers for Parliamentarians. These publications include overviews of policy areas and chronologies of key social welfare provisions. Both are useful for locating background information on a policy area or understanding how policy has changed over a period of time. Parliamentary sources provide a record both of the debates that surround policy and documents that related directly to policy change.

Go to the Policy Studies subject guide
   - This guide supports research in policy studies with a specific emphasis on Australian Social Policy and will help you identify:
     - Government departments and agencies involved in creating policy
     - sources where policy is published or recorded
     - sources which allow you to trace the history of a specific policy area
     - sources which analyse and discuss policy

Search Parlinfo for policy information
   - Media Releases ; Parliamentary Debates (the second reading speech of a bill is the major debate of policy issues) ; Committee Reports : Library Publications : political parties

Use the websites of political parties to search for policy documents

The National Library of Australia’s Pandora Archive [http://pandora.nla.gov.au/] includes political information on parties and election campaigns
To find policy documents for countries other than Australia [Slide 15]

- Search the websites of national governments (or the websites of government agencies) to find press releases.
- use a list of political parties such as http://www.politicalresources.net/ to find party policy documents
- Links are available to some international sites on the Policy Studies Subject guide under the Tab ‘Comparative and Global Policy Issues’

Finding Books on the Online Catalogue

- Go to the Catalogue by clicking on Catalogue tab from the Library’s Home Page, or go directly to http://sydney.edu.au/library
  - Use keyword to find books on your topic.
  - If you wish to search for autobiographies you will need to add the keyword “biography” to your search.
  - The library does not use the term autobiography.
  - You can also find edited books on your topic by including the term "edited" in your keyword search.

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