Resources and References

PENN FOSTER

Technologies in the Workplace : Resources and References

Lesson 2 Overview

In today's fast-paced business environment, a successful office professional is expected to find information quickly. You've heard the saying "knowledge is power." Well, for you to tap into this power, you must become knowledgeable about the tools available to help you search for accurate, up-to-date, and relevant information. This lesson is designed to teach you how to use resources and references to search for the information that will help you succeed in your job.

2.1 Identify types of information used by companies

Information about Your Organization

READING ASSIGNMENT

The Importance of Resources

The Importance of Resources

Where's that mailing address? Product information? Company policy? Financial report? In today's competitive workplace, finding accurate, reliable information instantly may mean the difference between success and failure.

You're in the middle of composing a report that must be completed by 3 P.M. when the telephone rings. Ms. Woodmont, your supervisor, is on a business trip and is calling from her hotel room. She says, "I've lost my credit card! Can you find the phone number of the credit card company and report that it's missing. Also, I need the pricing information for the McKeever project within the next 15 minutes. Please email me the spreadsheet right away. One more thing. See if you can book an earlier return flight. I'd like to come home on Thursday afternoon instead of Friday."

Imagine Ms. Woodmont's reaction when you calmly tell her, "I have the telephone number of the credit card company as well as your credit card number and will call the company immediately. I just sent the pricing information to you. Also, I'm searching airline information on the Internet as we speak to find you an earlier flight home."

[An image of a woman working in an office setting]

To be efficient, you must be well organized and able to find the information you need.

Efficiency like this doesn't just happen. Knowing where to find information quickly to help answer questions and solve problems shows your supervisors that you're resourceful and prepared to deal with the responsibilities of your job. Planning, organizing, and even creating your own references will help you handle the unexpected as well as the expected.

Types of Information Used by Organizations

Everyone in an organization uses information to aid in problem solving and decision making. This information must be readily available, up-to-

date, and accurate. If information is outdated or inaccurate, or if you fail to gather it fast enough, customers' needs won't be met and the company's product or service may not be of the highest quality. On the other hand, if information is up-to-date, accurate, and readily available, the customer's needs will be met and the organization will grow and prosper.

All information starts out as raw facts in one of the following forms:

- Numbers
- Letters
- Symbols
- Pictures

These raw facts must be combined and organized in a meaningful way so that knowledge can be gained from them. Letters of the alphabet may be organized as words that convey meaning; these words may be formatted as memos, letters, or business reports. Pictures may convey information in the form of graphs, charts, maps, diagrams, photographs, or other images. Numbers and symbols report financial and numerical data such as payrolls, price lists, product specifications, measurements, and standards.

Information in today's workplace may also be found in other forms, such as a combination of video and text. Audio information may be used to produce voice mail, speeches, dictation to be transcribed, training materials, and musical works.

Resource and Reference Tools

Much information can be obtained from sources readily available in your own workplace. Manuals prepared in-house containing your organization's policies, procedures, and job descriptions serve as a storehouse for facts unique to your workplace. Many computer hardware and software manuals as well as product and service catalogs are now available online. You should bookmark common Internet reference sources in their own folder on your workstation for easy access. You may want to keep printed copies of directories, guides, dictionaries, and thesauruses for quick reference.

[An image of a woman using a computer at a library to search for information]

You may search for information in libraries as well as on the Internet.

In addition to searching for information on the Internet, it may be

necessary to conduct research at a library to collect material from books, professional journals, magazines, newspapers, or other printed matter in preparation for a business report.

Key Points and Links

READING ASSIGNMENT

Key Points

- Information that is up-to-date, accurate, and readily available ensures that a company will succeed and meet the needs of their customers.
- Information comes in the form of numbers, letters, symbols, or pictures that are combined and organized in a useful way which provides knowledge.
- Pictures convey information in the form of charts, graphs, diagrams, photographs, maps, or types of images.
- Numbers and symbols can be combined to report financial data such as payrolls, price lists, product specifications, measurements, and standards.
- Today's workplace also provides information in the form of video, audio, and text.
- Your workplace may contain information sources such as in-house manuals about company policies, procedures, and job descriptions.
- The Internet and public libraries are additional ways to search for and research information.

Exercise: Information about Your Organization

Respond to the following based on your reading.

1. Planning, organizing, and even creating your own _____ will help you handle the unexpected as well as the expected.
2. Everyone in an organization uses information to aid in problem solving and _____.
3. All information starts out as raw facts. What are four forms of raw facts?
4. In addition to searching for information on the Internet, it may be necessary to conduct research at a _____ to collect material from books, professional journals, magazines, newspapers, or other printed matter in preparation for a business report.

Exercise Answer Key:

Exercise: Information about Your Organization

1. references
2. decision making
3. Numbers

   Letters

   Symbols

   Pictures
4. library

2.2 Recognize the types of resources and reference tools created by organizations

Communication about Your Organization

READING ASSIGNMENT

The communication of important information about the company is the responsibility of management. Most organizations prepare reference materials to inform employees about matters relating to their employment, such as personnel policies and procedures and job descriptions. Preparation of formal documents such as these is necessary to inform all employees of vital information. It's your responsibility to become familiar with these documents and to keep them in an accessible area of your workstation.

Other manuals that pertain to your job may be indispensable to you as you perform your daily tasks. These aids may include a procedures manual specific to your job responsibilities; detailed instruction manuals for your computer and other hardware, software, or products that have been purchased to help you perform your work tasks; and quick-list reference files.

Policy Manuals

A *policy* is a guideline. Organizations establish policies for employees to follow, such as how to ask for time off, how to report sexual harassment, or what hours the office is open. Policy writing is very

time consuming. First, an organization must decide what policies are needed. Then it must determine who will actually write the policies. Policies may be written by management or they may be written by an employee and approved by management. Outside consultants are sometimes hired to write policies. To make certain that all policies comply with federal and state laws, a lawyer will review your organization's policies.

Copies of policies are found in *policy manuals,* which are usually available on the company's website. Everyone in the organization should be supplied with access to a policy manual. The information contained in a particular policy manual depends on the type of organization. These manuals are commonly organized and maintained by the Human Resources department.

Procedures Manuals

A *procedures manual* presents detailed, step-by-step instructions for employees to follow when they perform their jobs. Some organizations refer to a procedures manual as a *staff manual* or an *employee handbook.* Some organizations may have several procedures manuals. For example, they may have one for document preparation, one for telephone procedures, one for records management, and one for general procedures.

Procedures manuals are often written by the employees who actually perform the tasks discussed within the manual. Procedures should be written in a well-organized, concise, and logical way. Because many

employees depend upon them for direction, procedures manuals must be easy to read. Each procedure discussed in a manual should be formatted the same way, and the writer should be careful not to omit any steps.

An outline for a procedures manual for the Von Cannon Plastics company is shown below. Notice that this manual is a general manual written for all employees of the organization. This procedures manual contains useful information for the employees at Von Cannon Plastics. You can see why all employees, both new and experienced, should have a copy readily available for use when needed.

VON CANNON PLASTICS PROCEDURES MANUAL

I. **GENERAL INFORMATION**
    A. Departments
        1. Administrative Services
        2. Engineering
        3. Accounting
        4. Manufacturing
        5. Information Systems
        6. Facilities Management
        7. Purchasing
    B. Building Layout
    C. Telephone Directory
    D. Company Newsletter

II. COMPANY PROCEDURES

A. Telecommunications Procedures
   1. Telephone
   2. Cloud storage
   3. Email

B. Purchases—Selection, Authorization, Control
   1. Supplies
   2. Equipment

C. Records Management
   1. Central Files
   2. Charge Out/Follow Up
   3. Requisition
   4. Transfer, Storage, Retention

D. Hardware and Software
   1. Support Services
   2. Training
   3. Inventory

E. Travel
   1. Request and Approval
   2. Expense Reports
   3. Reservations
   4. Reimbursement

F. Mail Services
   1. Incoming Mail
   2. Outgoing Mail

G. Document Preparation

1. Interoffice Communications
    a. Memoranda
    b. Email
2. Outside Correspondence
    a. Letters
    b. Email
3. Business Reports
4. Desktop Publishing
    H. Hiring Procedures

Now review a sample portion of the procedures manual. As you can see, it's well written and easy to understand.

PROCEDURES FOR HIRING

Step 1: Supervisor submits completed Vacancy Announcement Form to department manager for approval.

Step 2: Department manager reviews request, initials form for approval, and forwards it to the personnel office.

Step 3: The personnel office advertises position. Position is posted in-house for two weeks before being advertised locally.

Step 4: Upon the closing of the job vacancy listing, which can occur at the end of the two-week, in-house posting, the personnel office will schedule interviews. Interview schedules will be coordinated for the applicants and the interviewer(s).

Step 5: Applicants are interviewed. If no one in the applicant pool is selected, the position may be reopened for advertising.

Step 6: If an applicant is chosen for the position, a recommendation is made to the department manager, who will make the final employment decision.

Step 7: The applicant to be hired is notified within three days of the hire date.

Step 8: The new employee reports to the personnel office before the first day of work to fill out pertinent documents and receive new-employee orientation.

Well-written procedures manuals have the following characteristics in common:

[An image of binders on a shelf]

Looseleaf binders allow for easy addition and deletion of pages to a manual.

- Wherever it's useful, illustrations, graphics, diagrams, and samples of actual forms and documents are used for clarification.
- If the procedure relates to a policy, the policy is identified.
- Technical terms are defined. The meanings of abbreviations are provided.
- Sexist language such as "the secretary must inform *her . . .*" or "the boss will inform *his . . .*" is avoided.
- A numbered-list format is used when step-by-step instructions are provided.
- If printed, a looseleaf binder is used for easy addition and deletion of pages.

Job Description Manuals

A *job description* is a statement that describes the duties of a specific job within an organization. Job description manuals contain a collection of descriptions of jobs to be performed within an organization. Well-written job descriptions are concise one- or two-page summaries of position responsibilities, qualifications, lines of promotion, and hierarchical structures. Some contain pay ranges, specialized responsibilities, or other information. You probably have a written job description for your position. If you don't, it's a good idea to prepare one. Good job descriptions form a basis for performance reviews, eliminate misunderstandings among employees as to responsibilities, and serve as an orientation to new or potential employees. Review the job description for a computer support specialist. Notice that it's well organized and provides the employee

with a clear picture of responsibilities and other important facts about the position.

COMPUTER SUPPORT TECHNICIAN

Position Description

Computer Support Technician performs a variety of duties and responsibilities, such as

- Install, maintain, and troubleshoot computer hardware and software
- Evaluate training needs of users
- Plan, organize, conduct, and evaluate training of users
- Evaluate software and hardware products and make purchasing recommendations
- Perform network administration tasks
- Perform tasks as requested by the supervisor

Job Qualifications

Education Requirements: Associate degree, or higher, in information systems

Experience Requirements: One year of work experience

Skills Required:

- Excellent interpersonal skills

- Oral and written communication skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Computer skills using a variety of software and hardware

Advancement

Computer Support Specialist, Computer Support Supervisor, Information Systems Manager, Chief Information Officer

Reports to

Computer Support Supervisor

Pay Range

- Minimum: $28,000
- Median: $34,000
- Maximum: $40,000

Though job descriptions are beneficial, they do have some drawbacks. As you know, jobs today are becoming more and more complex and challenging. Because organizations change so quickly, job responsibilities for a particular position may also change frequently. Constant updating of job descriptions is time consuming. When job descriptions are inaccurate or poorly written, misunderstandings between the employee and management can result. Employee job performance, creativity, and innovation may be inhibited or limited because of poorly written or outdated job descriptions. Your annual review is a good time to discuss changes to your job description to

keep it up-to-date.

Workstation Manuals

A *workstation manual,* or *desk manual,* is a source of information that relates to a specific position within an organization. A workstation manual is more specialized than any of the manuals you've learned about so far. Policy manuals, procedures manuals, and job description manuals are usually available to all employees within an organization. A particular workstation manual is generally available only to those who hold that job. For example, an administrative assistant might have a workstation manual written especially for administrative assistants. Though the content of workstation manuals varies from one organization to another, most include the following:

- A position overview
- An organizational chart
- Departmental directories of employees and services
- Teams/committees
- Telephone etiquette
- Filing system
- Specialized forms
- Mail-handling procedures
- Workstation hardware/software/furniture inventory
- Daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly job tasks

A workstation manual can serve as a guide to assist whoever assumes the responsibilities of a job, whether it be a new employee, a

temporary employee, or an experienced employee seeking information. A supervisor can use the manual to analyze and review specific data pertinent to the position.

Instruction Manuals

When equipment and computer software packages are purchased, *instruction manuals* are often included. Instruction manuals are documents produced by a manufacturer to assist with installation, routine maintenance, and troubleshooting of minor problems with equipment or computer software. Many of these manuals are now available online and have extensive help sections.

Because of the variety of formats and writing styles used in instruction manuals, you may want to supplement your manufacturer instruction manuals with other reference guides written by professionals. This supplemental material may be published in-house by technical people from your organization or by commercial publishers.

Refer to your instruction manuals when you have equipment and software problems. Before you request a repair, read your manual. Very often a problem may be surprisingly simple to solve. Lots of time and money can be saved if you use instruction manuals to solve problems yourself. A well-written instruction manual contains the following information:

- Warranty
- Copyright

- Installation procedures

- Operating instructions

- Advanced operating instructions

- Maintenance

- Troubleshooting

Quick-List Files

A *quick-list file* is a list of frequently requested information. You can develop quick-list files by compiling facts and figures as you perform your daily activities. For example, do customers, service providers, coworkers, and supervisors repeatedly ask you for the same information? If so, it's only logical to organize this information into lists kept close at hand. Storing this information on your computer desktop makes it easy to access.

Note: By definition the quick list needs to be available quickly. While computers are magnificent for storing and organizing information, it can be cumbersome to access this information on the computer versus having it printed in a file on your desk. You decide which method works best for you.

Quick-list files are helpful whenever someone has to fill in for you, such as when you're ill or on vacation or when you're training a replacement. The following information is often included in quick-list files.

[An image of a female office worker looking at a document on her desk for information]

Keep service telephone numbers, serial numbers, and other important information readily available.

- Commonly asked questions. Do customers ask you the same questions time and time again? If so, it's logical to develop a set of standard answers. Write down the questions and develop written answers for them. Over time, you'll create a list of common questions and standard answers. You'll be more relaxed dealing with customers if you have some standard replies in front of you.

- Emergency procedures. An appropriate, quick response to any emergency is essential and may mean the difference between life and death. Therefore, you need to know what to do in case of injuries, fires, toxic fumes, machine malfunctions, explosions, earthquakes, and other disasters. Typically companies develop

an emergency manual that contains procedures to follow. If your company hasn't developed one, it's a good idea to generate a quick list of emergency contacts. Design and store this information so it's easy to use quickly and transport, such as in a waterproof folder.

- Product or service information. Information about products and services that you use to perform your job should be easily accessible. Keep service telephone numbers, serial numbers, purchase order numbers, and warranty information for the equipment you use readily available. Coordinate with other departments to develop a list of this information and keep it near your telephone. If you have a large collection of software and equipment, use a folder or binder to hold product information. A well-organized folder or binder containing data that service people generally request will enable you to get the help you need quickly. Software such as Outlook is very easy to use and makes retrieval of this information effortless. However, in case your computer needs repair, you should have a backup hardcopy file somewhere for quick access.

- Credit card information. Suppose you're on a business trip and your credit cards are lost or stolen. Imagine what could happen if you don't have the card numbers and phone numbers of the card issuers! Adequate planning is essential. Create a list of credit card information for company credit cards. Photocopy the cards and keep the copy in a secure place separate from where you keep the card—for example, with the accounting department or in

a password-protected computer document.

Key Points and Links

READING ASSIGNMENT

Key Points

- Company management communicates important information to employees through a variety of reference materials, but it is the employees' responsibility to become familiar with these documents and ensure they are within easy access of their workstation.
- Reference materials supplied by a company include personnel policies and procedures, job descriptions, procedures manual specific to a job, instruction manuals, and quick-list reference files.
- A policy manual contains copies of a company's guidelines that employees must follow and are usually found on the company's website.
- A procedures manual—which may also be known as a staff manual, employee handbook, or other names—contain detailed step-by-step instructions for employees to follow as they perform their job.
- Well-written procedure manuals identify related policies, defines technical terms, avoids sexist language, uses a numbered list format, and provides procedures in a loose-leaf binder for the easy addition and deletion of procedures.

- A workstation manual is a source of information that relates to a specific position within an organization.
- A quick-list file is a compilation of facts, figures, and other information that helps an employee perform their daily tasks and is usually kept on their computer desktop for easy access.

Exercise: Communication about Your Organization

Respond to the following based on your reading.

1. A _____ is a guideline.
2. What characteristics do well-written procedures manuals have in common?
3. A _____ presents detailed, step-by-step instructions for employees to follow when they perform their jobs.
4. Well-written _____ are concise one- or two-page summaries of position responsibilities, qualifications, lines of promotion, and hierarchical structures.

Exercise Answer Key:
Exercise: Communication about Your Organization

1. policy
2. Wherever it's useful, illustrations, graphics, diagrams, and samples of actual forms and documents are used for clarification. If the procedure relates to a policy, the policy is identified. Technical terms are defined. The meanings of abbreviations are

provided. Sexist language such as "the secretary must inform her

. . ." or "the boss will inform his . . ." is avoided. A numbered-list

format is used when step-by-step instructions are provided. If

printed, a looseleaf binder is used for easy addition and deletion

of pages.

3. procedures manual

4. job descriptions

2.3 Identify the purpose of standard reference resources

Standard Reference Resources

READING ASSIGNMENT

In the past, offices used to be full of shelves with reference material

used in everyday tasks: phone directories, dictionaries, style guides,

equipment manuals, and supply catalogs. Many of these resources

have moved onto the Internet. Organizing these sources can help you

find information quickly and efficiently.

Dictionaries

Successful communication of ideas and information is vital to an office

professional. *Dictionaries* provide definitions of words as well as

pronunciation guides and examples of word usage. Dictionaries are

the most commonly used reference material. As an office professional

you'll spend much of your time communicating via memos, letters,

reports, email, voice mail, presentations, and teleconferences. No matter how proficient you are with language, there will be times when you're unsure about spelling, pronunciations, meanings, and usage. Or you might simply need another word to replace the same tired word.

Standard dictionaries can be *unabridged* or *abridged*. Unabridged dictionaries are the most complete; they contain a wealth of information about all words including the basic word divided by syllables, the correct pronunciation, the part of speech (if the word is a noun, a verb, an adjective, or an adverb) and the definition or meaning of the word. Unabridged dictionaries also contain information like the history of the word. One of the best unabridged dictionaries is the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Over 20 large volumes in print, it's now available online via many libraries. *Abridged* dictionaries are condensed versions of unabridged dictionaries. Their printed versions are much shorter, and they don't include all words or as much information about the words they do include.

Dictionaries must be revised continuously. Language is changing rapidly in today's highly computerized workplace; words are being added and gaining new meanings. In addition, spelling, pronunciation, and grammar change over time. Therefore, when you evaluate a dictionary, consider its year of publication and its completeness. Make sure your dictionary contains the following information:

- **Main entry:** The basic word. The main entry is broken into

syllables by spacing, dashes, or dots. For example, "studious" is divided into three syllables: **stu-di-ous.**

- ***Pronunciation:*** The correct way to say the word. The pronunciation is given in parentheses after the main entry. Primary stress of a syllable is indicated with a primary accent mark before the stressed syllable. Secondary stress is indicated with a lighter accent mark. A key to pronunciation is usually supplied in the front of each dictionary. Some online dictionaries provide audio files of the word being spoken.

- ***Part of speech:*** The way the word should be used within a sentence—is it a thing (noun), an action (verb), or a description (adjective), for example. Part of speech is indicated by an abbreviation following the entry or the pronunciation. A word may be more than one part of speech. If so, each part is identified and is followed by a definition. For "studious" the part of speech is adj (adjective).

- ***Definition:*** The meaning of the word. The definition is the majority of information contained in an entry. The first definition of "studious" is "assiduous in the pursuit of learning."

There are a wide variety of dictionaries available from your computer, including the spell checker included with your word processor. These are normally somewhat limited, so try the Internet for a variety of other sources. The easiest way is to simply run a search. Say "define [word]" where [word] is what you want to find. The search engine will search a variety of sources including the online Merriam-Webster

[dictionary](merriam-webster.com) (merriam-webster.com) , [Dictionary.com](dictionary.com) (dictionary.com) , and a variety of specialized subject dictionaries.

If you're employed in an industry with a specialized vocabulary you might want to find a specialized dictionary that covers your field. The following industries commonly use specialized dictionaries, many of which can be found on the Internet:

- Accounting
- Business
- Chemistry
- Finance and investment
- Insurance
- Law
- Real estate

Thesauruses

A *thesaurus* is a book of words and their synonyms, antonyms, and related phrases. These are another reference material that's used frequently. When you're creating a letter, memo, or notes for a presentation, a thesaurus can add variety, accuracy, and freshness to your writing. Using a thesaurus increases your vocabulary and adds richness to your oral and written communication. When you use a thesaurus, make sure that you also use a dictionary if you're uncertain about a word's meaning. Word meanings can change according to the context of a sentence and you want to be sure that any word you use is correct.

Words are listed alphabetically in the thesaurus and the part of speech is usually provided. Some thesauruses also provide the definition of the word you're looking up and the definitions of its synonyms.

Many different types of thesauruses are available. Two of the most commonly used are:

- [Merriam-Webster Thesaurus](www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus) (www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus)
- [Oxford Living Dictionary and Thesaurus](en.oxforddictionaries.com/english-thesaurus) (en.oxforddictionaries.com/english-thesaurus)

Geographical References

If your business has a global presence or employees need to travel frequently you'll need a source of geographical information. Much of this information has moved to the Internet, which will provide information about travel conditions, transportation, weather, and nearby facilities. There are many sources on the Internet which provide this information. Here are a few:

- http://maps.google.com (maps.google.com)
- http://bing.com/maps (bing.com/maps)
- http://mapquest.com (mapquest.com)
- http://weatherchannel.com (weatherchannel.com)

These sites have various user-friendly features. One that's very useful

is the ability to send directions or a map to a smartphone.
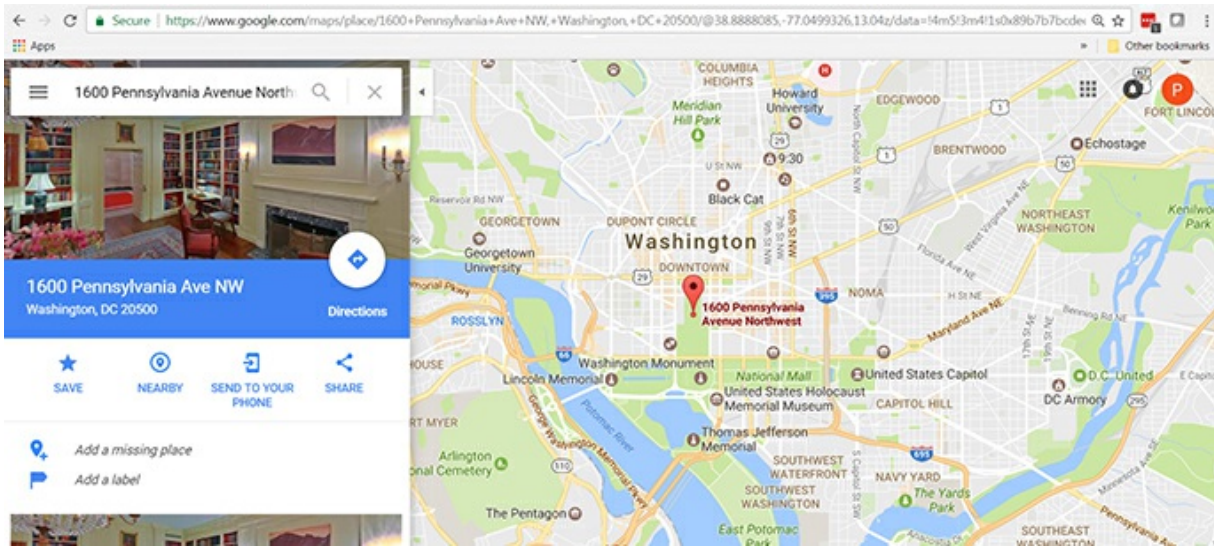
[An image of a searchable map]

You'll find searchable maps online.

Directories

Phone directories have moved online as some phone companies have ceased printing directories entirely. The two most popular online phone directories are:

- Whitepages (whitepages.com) covers information about residential listings. Besides offering the usual name, address, and phone number, the site also offers additional information for a fee, including past employment and a criminal background check.
- The site YP (yellowpages.com) does the same thing for businesses, with the addition of links to websites if available, reviews, and hours of operation.

Another useful site to find ZIP Codes is [Look Up a ZIP Code](tools.usps.com/go/ZipLookupAction!input.action) (tools.us ps.com/go/ZipLookupAction!input.action) , from the U.S. Post Office. Simply enter the address and the website returns the correct ZIP Code.

City Directories

These are becoming less common in the age of the Internet, but *city directories* offer listings of names, addresses, telephone numbers, and occupations of residents along with listings of business and their principal administrators. Directories contain listings by street as well as by name, which can provide useful information about specific neighborhoods. Check your local library as they'll have a collection of recent and past city directories. Some may even be available on the Internet now. The [Library of Congress](loc.gov) (loc.gov) is a source of past and current city directories that can be helpful for the office professional working in an archival capacity.

Style Guides

A *style guide* is a book that contains formatting and editing guidelines. A style guide shows you how to present information so that it's neat, orderly, consistent, and correct. One of the most useful and widely accepted style guides is the *[Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law](www.apstylebook.com) (www.apstylebook.com)* . The *AP Stylebook,* as it's often called, is the standard for all newspaper reporting and was developed to answer commonly asked questions such as

- Do you write "P.M." in capital or lowercase letters? And, is there a space between the P and the M?
- What are the differences among burglary, larceny, robbery, and theft?
- Is "attorney at law" hyphenated?
- Do you say "contrasted to" or "contrasted with"?
- Is "folk singer" one word or two?
- What does "AKA" stand for?

Other style guides, such as the *Modern Language Association (MLA)* (*style.mla.org/)* and the *Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)* *(www.chicag omanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) ,* can help you format formal research reports. Many organizations adopt a particular style guide for use so that written communications within the company are consistent. Then, every person who writes, edits, types, or dictates information is given a copy and expected to conform to it.

Office Reference Manuals and Handbooks

Special handbooks and reference manuals are written for professionals in many different fields, such as personnel administration, sales, real estate, accounting, medicine, and law, to name only a few. You can even find handbooks about business etiquette. Office manuals also have sections on email, voice mail, and other electronic communications techniques and procedures. Many office professionals regard their office handbook as their most valuable resource.

It is important to remember that any time you're quoting material from a source, you provide attribution. Various style manuals have different rules for attributing sources. Be sure to refer to those manuals, whether it be [AP](www.apstylebook.com/) , [MLA](style.mla.org/) , [APA](www.apastyle.org/) , or [Chicago](www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html) , whenever you're including quoted material.

Equipment and Supply Catalogs

As an office professional, you may be asked to prepare equipment and supply requisitions. Your ability to supply the needed information within the given time frame is important. You must research sources to compare prices, quality, service, and delivery options. You can supply this information quickly if you maintain an up-to-date file of catalogs for a variety of products. Suppliers maintain websites where you can find the most current product or service. Keep these bookmarked for easy access. You may be able to order directly, depending on your company's purchasing department. Many online catalogs have pictures of products for you to view.

If you do need to maintain paper catalogs here are some guidelines for their use. Keep equipment and supply catalogs in your filing cabinet or on a nearby bookcase. The following are some popular types of catalogs:

- Hardware and supplies—computers, printers, scanners
- Office furniture—desks, chairs, tables, filing cabinets, storage cabinets, and bookcases

- Office supplies—ergonomic aids, desk supplies, calendars, filing supplies, computer storage media, paper, and toner cartridges
- Plant and industrial supplies—tools and janitorial products

Obtaining a supply of catalogs is easy. Local office supply businesses will send you their catalogs and price lists if requested. Also, you can call manufacturers to request catalogs or go online. If you order from them regularly you'll find that you're on their mailing list.

Eventually, you'll need to devise a filing system for your catalogs. You may decide to file them alphabetically either by vendor or product and service. An alphabetic system is probably best if you have relatively few catalogs. But what if you have hundreds of vendor catalogs and brochures?

An efficient, simple way to file a large number of catalogs is to devise a numeric system. Prepare guides that contain numbers and assign a number to each vendor who sends you a catalog. Place a vendor's number on every catalog you receive from that business. Then, file the catalogs by number. With this type of filing system, you need to index catalogs by both product and vendor in alphabetical order. Some catalogs are issued monthly or quarterly. It's best to discard obsolete and outdated catalogs when their replacements arrive.

Personal Resources File

People are often your most valuable resource. Whenever you learn that a certain person, agency, or institution has specific kinds of

information available, enter the person's name, email address, website address, telephone number, and mailing address in your contact database.

Key Points and Links

READING ASSIGNMENT

Key Points

- Dictionaries define words, provide examples of word usage, and provide a pronunciation guide for each word.
- Standard dictionaries can be unabridged, which contain a lot of information and history about each word, or *abridged*, which are condensed versions of unabridged dictionaries.
- A thesaurus is a book that contains words and their synonyms, antonyms, and related phrases.
- A style guide provides formatting and editing guidelines so that information is presented in a neat, orderly, and consistent manner.
- As an office professional, you must be able to research printed or online equipment and supply catalogs to compare prices, quality, service, and delivery options.

Links

- [Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus](www.merriam-webster.com/) (www.merriam-webster.com/)
- [Dicionary.com](www.dictionary.com/) (www.dictionary.com/)

- [Oxford Living Dictionary and Thesaurus](en.oxforddictionaries.com/english-thesaurus) (en.oxforddictionaries.com/english-thesaurus)
- [Google maps](maps.google.com) (maps.google.com)
- [Bing maps](bing.com/maps) (bing.com/maps)
- [MapQuest](mapquest.com) (mapquest.com)
- [Weather Channel](weatherchannel.com) (weatherchannel.com)
- [Whitepages](whitepages.com) (whitepages.com)
- [Yellow pages](yellowpages.com) (yellowpages.com)
- [ZIP codes](tools.usps.com/go/ZipLookupAction!input.action) (tools.usps.com/go/ZipLookupAction!input.action)
- [Library of Congress](loc.gov) (loc.gov)
- *[Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law](www.apstylebook.com) (www.apstylebook.com)*
- *[Modern Language Association (MLA)](style.mla.org/) (style.mla.org/)*
- *[Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)](www.chicagomanualofstyle.com/tools_citationguide.html) (www.chicagomanualofstyle.com/tools_citationguide.html)*
- *[American Psychological Association (APA)](www.apastyle.org/) (www.apastyle.org/)*

Exercise: Standard Reference Resources

Respond to the following based on your reading.

1. What four kinds of information do dictionaries need to contain?
2. A _____ is a book of words and their synonyms, antonyms, and related phrases.
3. A _____ shows you how to present information so that it's neat, orderly, consistent, and correct.

4. List and give examples of at least two popular types of catalogs.

Exercise Answer Key:

Exercise: Standard Reference Resources

1. The main entry, pronunciation, part of speech, and the definition.
2. thesaurus
3. style guide
4. Answers will vary. Must include two of the following:
   - Hardware and supplies—computers, printers, scanners
   - Office furniture—desks, chairs, tables, filing cabinets, storage cabinets, and bookcases
   - Office supplies—ergonomic aids, desk supplies, calendars, filing supplies, computer storage media, paper, and toner cartridges
   - Plant and industrial supplies—tools and janitorial products

2.4 Explain how to use online resources such as a virtual library to locate resources

The Library and the Internet

READING ASSIGNMENT

Suppose you're a member of an office team that's revising your organization's copyright policy. You discover that computer software isn't mentioned in the policy. The team realizes that it's important to

communicate to employees that they shouldn't infringe on software copyrights. You volunteer to research the copyright law as it applies to software to make certain employees don't inadvertently violate the laws.

Many libraries today have robust virtual libraries that you can access from your office or home. Many of these resources are subject to limitations set by the publisher of the information, who can restrict access to their products to authorized library patrons. A library card to your public library will provide this access. Many academic libraries offer a more robust set of business databases, but offsite use is restricted to the students, faculty, and staff of that institution. Many of these libraries do offer onsite access to visitors, however. Some companies, nonprofit organizations, medical facilities, and government agencies have their own specialized libraries. Don't hesitate to ask permission to use these specialized libraries or consult their websites.

Libraries offer help via a variety of methods these days: in-person consultations, phone interviews, and chat and text messages through the library's website.

Finding Books in the Library

Today's libraries offer books in both print and e-reader formats. To search for books, find the library's online catalog on their homepage. You can type the author, subject, or title of a specific book that you're seeking or just type in specific words related to the topic to see what the library has.

Classification Systems

Libraries organize materials using one of two systems: the *Dewey decimal* classification system or the *Library of Congress* classification system.

The Dewey decimal system is numerical, with 10 primary groupings. According to this system, all books are divided into 10 general subject categories. A suffix may be added to a specific area number to show the type of book. For example, the suffix .03 means that the book is a dictionary. An economics dictionary might have a Dewey decimal number of 330.03. Review the Dewey decimal classification system.

DEWEY DECIMAL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

000–099   General Works

100–199   Philosophy and Psychology

200–299   Religion

300–399   Social Sciences

400–499   Languages

500–599   Pure Sciences and Mathematics

600–699   Technology

700–799   Arts

800–899   Literature

900–999   History

F   Fiction in Literature

B   Individual Biography

The Library of Congress system uses letters rather than numbers to classify books into subject groups. A second letter is added to subclassify a book's subject, and a suffix can be added to indicate the book's type. Thus, a book on report writing would have a Dewey decimal number of 808.02 and a Library of Congress number of LB2369. Review the Library of Congress classification system.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

A   General Works

B   Philosophy, Psychology, Religion

C–F   History, Topography (except U.S.)

G   Geography, Anthropology, Recreation

H   Social Sciences

J   Political Science

K   Law

L   Education

M   Music

N   Fine Arts

P   Language and Literature

Q   Science

R   Medicine

S   Agriculture

T   Technology

U   Military Science

V   Naval Science

Z   Bibliography and Library Science

Books are further classified under both systems. The first letter of the author's last name is followed by a number that's assigned to the author. Another number is assigned to that particular book only. No two books in a library filing system have the same assigned number.

Online Books

Libraries are increasingly developing collections of ebooks, but not

everything is available in this format yet. Ebooks are found in the online catalog and are normally indicated by the phrase *online access*. These books can be downloaded for a limited amount of time and are best read on specific apps designed to format the book to read comfortably on a computer.

General Business Databases

Most libraries have at least one general business database. This section provides information on the most popular databases and gives instructions on searching them.

Most libraries have listings of databases by subject. Some have a brief description of what the database contains as well. Make sure that the database covers the industry, geographic area, and time period that you're searching for.

Databases provide information on companies, people, products, and general market conditions. This information can come from a variety of sources, such as scholarly academic articles, trade publications, government sources, or newspapers. A list of available databases should be on the library's website.

- Click on the database link. If you're in the library, this will take you to the opening screen to start your database search. If you're not in the library you'll be asked to prove that you're eligible to use the database. (Libraries can let *only* their registered patrons use their databases from a home or office.) This is normally done by

entering your last name and a library-specific number.

- This should then take you to the opening screen of the database. You'll be able to type in the search terms that you're looking for; remember to use keywords rather than typing an entire sentence. You can also limit your search at this point by criteria such as the type of publication (scholarly or general) or request that the search find full text results only.

Searching: **Business Source Elite** | Choose Databases

marketing communication strategy ✕ **Search** ?

Search Options ▸   Basic Search   Advanced Search   Search History

Search Options

Reset

Search Modes and Expanders

Search modes ?
- ◉ Boolean/Phrase
- ○ Find all my search terms
- ○ Find any of my search terms
- ○ SmartText Searching Hint

Apply related words
☐

Also search within the full text of the articles
☐

Apply equivalent subjects
☐

Limit your results

Full Text
☐

Scholarly (Peer Reviewed) Journals
☐

Published Date
Month ▼ Year: ___ – Month ▼ Year: ___

Publication
___

Publication Type
All
Periodical
Newspaper
Book

Number Of Pages
All ▼ ___

Image Quick View
☐

Image Quick View Types
- ☐ Black and White Photograph
- ☐ Color Photograph
- ☐ Chart
- ☐ Diagram

[Image of an example of the first screen that typically appears when opening a database.]

An example of the first screen that typically appears when opening a database.

- The search results will display a list of articles that match your terms. On one side there will be options that allow you to change your search to limit the results by specific criteria such as date, type of publication, or language. If your boss wants you to find the latest information, for instance, you might want to limit your search to the last year. After you've applied your limits you need to examine your results list to see if it contains the information you need. You can do this by looking at the article titles or clicking to read the *abstract,* which is a short summary of what the article is about. Many of the results will have a link to the full text of the article; this is normally located underneath the citation. Clicking on that link will take you to the full article.
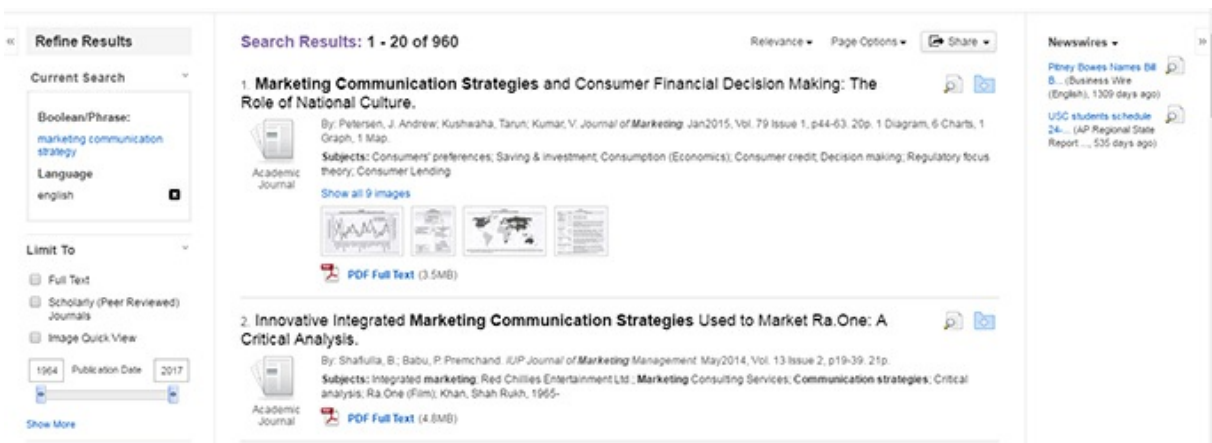
[Image of an example of a search results screen in a database.]

An example of a search results screen in a database.

Some major business databases are *ABI Inform*, *Business Source,* and *Business Insights*. Each of these databases has a different form of presentation and a different list of journals but they contain roughly the same information.

Your boss might ask you to find information on a company or person with whom she'll be meeting. General business databases might have this information but you could also look for it in local, regional, or national newspapers as well. Local newspapers have websites where you'll be able to retrieve a limited number of articles; after those, you'll need to subscribe or pay a fee per article. If you're looking for a company or person out of the area, the library might be able to help you by providing access to a regional business newspaper database or a national source like the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times*. These databases work much like the business database as described above.

Using the Internet for Research

Throughout this lesson, we've referred to several sites on the Internet that you can use for research. Using the Internet for research is a common activity performed by students of all ages, employees from all organization types, and by many simply for personal use. You no longer have to travel to the nearest library to search for information or subscribe to a variety of expensive journals that occupy valuable storage space. The Internet has converted research into a global activity that's limited only to one's experience and ability to use search engines.

A *search engine* is a web-based function that searches the Internet using the specific keyword(s) entered. The search results may include websites, articles, journal entries, news reports, even images that

contain those keywords. Some of the better-known search engines on the Internet today include

- [Google](www.google.com) (www.google.com)
- [Bing](www.bing.com) (www.bing.com)
- [Ask](www.ask.com) (www.ask.com)
- [Dogpile](www.dogpile.com) (www.dogpile.com)

An important note to consider when using the Internet for research: the Internet is dynamic and changes by the minute. There's no method to confirm the accuracy of information found there, with the exception of whatever internal procedures are implemented by the entities posting the information. For example, scientific journals subject articles to review by other scientists before publication. Information may be provided by reputable research organizations, or simply by individuals who may or may not have expertise in the subject. The integrity of information provided on the Internet is basically on the "honor system." Keep in mind that when you conduct Internet research, it's only as good as the source that provided it.

Here are some areas to consider when you use the Internet for research:

- **Authority:** Does the site list an author or responsible organization? What are the author's qualifications (education or expertise)? Does the page list contact information?
- **Coverage**: Is the information relevant to your needs? Is it in-depth or superficial?

- **Objectivity:** Does the site display bias about the facts you're researching? Is it an opinion site or fact based?
- **Accuracy**: Is the site free of obvious mistakes? Does it seem reliable?
- **Timeliness:** Does the site list when it was last updated? Do the links work?

This article expands on those topics: Evaluation Methods in Education: Web Evaluation (guides.lib.vt.edu/c.php?g=134398&p=880 873) .

Sources of Statistics

Your boss might ask you to find statistics to back up the case she's making for her new plan. There are a wide variety of sources available, some free and some not. Let's start with the free sources:

USA.gov (www.USA.gov) gathers all the information provided online by the federal government in one searchable web page. For data and statistics, go to the Data and Statistics (www.usa.gov/statistics) section. There's a wealth of information here, including census data, labor and justice statistics, and a variety of data on industry. At the bottom of this page there's a link to similar pages for state and local governments.

Libraries also subscribe to databases that provide access to a wider group of statistics. An example is *Statista (www.statista.com/) ,* which covers not only the United States but also data sources from Europe

and Asia. It contains data from private as well as public sources. It allows users to download materials in a variety of common formats that can be used in reports.

Professional Associations

Many professional associations conduct their own research and make it available to the public, often for a small fee. If you contact a specific association frequently for information, you should probably consider joining it so you can take advantage of other benefits such as seminars, product news, conventions, assistance hotlines, and product discounts.

Key Points and Links

READING ASSIGNMENT

Key Points

- There are several types of libraries including public libraries, which allow you to access and take out information using a library card, academic libraries, which may offer you temporary visitor access, and specialized libraries that pertain to a specific company, organization, or agency and may have online access options.
- Libraries today offer books in printed and e-reader formats, which you may search for using the library's online card catalog.
- Libraries organize materials in one of two classification systems: the Dewey Decimal system, which is numeric, and the Library of

Congress system, which uses letters.

- To determine if a book comes in an e-reader format, search the online card catalog for entries that have the phrase online access.
- Most libraries have general business databases that contain information by subject on companies, people, products, and general market conditions.
- Libraries also subscribe to databases that provide access to a wider group of statistics.

Links

- [Google](www.google.com) (www.google.com)
- [Bing](www.bing.com) (www.bing.com)
- [Ask](www.ask.com) (www.ask.com)
- [Dogpile](www.dogpile.com) (www.dogpile.com)
- [Evaluation Methods in Education: Web Evaluation](guides.lib.vt.edu/c.php?g=134398&p=880873) (guides.lib.vt.edu/c.php?g=134398&p=880873)
- [USA.gov](www.USA.gov) (www.USA.gov)
- [USA.gov Data and Statistics](www.usa.gov/statistics) (www.usa.gov/statistics)
- [Statista](www.statista.com/) (www.statista.com/)

Exercise: The Library and the Internet

Respond to the following based on your reading.

1. The _____ decimal system is numerical, with 10 primary

groupings.

2. The _____ system uses letters rather than numbers to classify books into subject groups.

3. Ebooks are found in the online catalog and are normally indicated by the phrase _____.

4. Most libraries have listings of databases by _____.

5. A _____ is a web-based function that searches the Internet using the specific keyword(s) entered.

6. What are five elements to be considered when evaluating resources from online?

Exercise Answer Key:

Exercise: The Library and the Internet

1. Dewey
2. Library of Congress
3. online access
4. subject
5. search engine
6. Authority, coverage, objectivity, accuracy, and timeliness

Lesson 2 Review

Self-Check

1. What is a benefit of keeping your organization's information accurate and readily available?

    a. Your organization gets more customers.

    b. You will be well liked by your colleagues.

    c. You will better meet your customer's needs.

    d. You are able to work shorter days.

2. Which kind of raw fact is organized into diagrams, charts, or graphs?

    a. Paper

    b. Letters

    c. Pictures

    d. Numbers

3. Which manual is for a specific job in the company?

    a. Procedures manual

    b. Workstation manual

    c. Instruction manual

    d. Policy manual

4. Which resource would likely contain customers' frequently asked questions and answers?

    a. Procedures manual

    b. Job description manual

    c. Workstation manual

    d. Quick-list files

5. The office printer is jammed and no one can print anymore. Maurice, as the person in charge of the office equipment, needs to solve this problem. What should he do first?

a. Order a replacement printer.

b. Call the printer manufacturer.

c. Consult the instruction manual.

d. Add this problem to the quick-list file.

6. What resource can serve as an orientation for new employees, eliminate misunderstandings between employees, and even a basis for performance reviews?

a. Job descriptions

b. Organizational charts

c. Policy manuals

d. Workstation manuals

7. Which department typically maintains policy manuals?

a. Executive management

b. Human resources

c. Legal

d. Administrative support

8. Why should the procedures in procedure manuals be easy to read?

a. The procedures should be just an overview of the task, so there's no need to get into details.

b. Many employees will read them and rely on them.

c. Only employees who have never performed the procedure will read them.

d. You will need to write them very fast so they should be brief.

9. Which resource contains examples of word usage, pronunciation, and definitions?

a. Dictionary

b. Style guide

c. Directory

d. Thesaurus

10. While composing a letter for your boss, you are unsure whether you should use the word "affect" or "effect." What resource will help you find the answer?

a. Thesaurus

b. Quick-list file

c. Style guide

d. Library database

11. Your boss is traveling to a nearby city for the first time for a two-week client visit. He wants to stay in a neighborhood that has a lively arts scene. Which of these resources would help you find some desirable neighborhoods for your boss to stay in?

a. A city directory

b. Whitepages

c. A statistics database

d. A business database

12. Your boss regularly asks you to research prices, service, and delivery options for equipment that the office regularly uses. How can you save time looking up that information in the future?

a. Create a set of instructions for looking up this information.

b. Bookmark the supplier's website.

c. Add the supplier's phone number to the employee handbook.

d. Enter the supplier's address in your car's GPS system.

13. Where could you look to find more information about topics like

office procedures and personnel administration?

a. Dictionaries

b. Supply catalogs

c. Style guides

d. Office professional handbooks

14. What kind of information do you put in a contact database or personal resources file?

a. The person's contact information and directions to the company

b. The person's contact information and area of expertise

c. The person's address and birthday

d. The person's address and photo

15. Your company has offices across the United States. You've been asked to find out the weather forecast in each office location. Which kind of reference should you look at for this information?

a. A statistics database

b. An employee handbook

c. A geographical reference

d. A phone directory

16. Which of the following is one of the better-known search engines on the Internet today?

a. Bing

b. Firefox

c. ESPN

d. Jeeves

17. What should you consider when researching on the Internet?

a. Was it the first search result?

b. Is the information from the last few days?

c. Is the website a television station?

d. Is the website an opinion site or does it give facts?

18. Your boss asks you to research some background information about a client she's meeting for lunch. What library resource would be the best to use?

a. An ebook

b. A city directory

c. A business database

d. A style guide

19. What library resource can be downloaded for a limited amount of time?

a. Style guides

b. Statista

c. Dictionaries

d. Ebooks

20. The librarian tells you that the book you're looking for is found under 658.872. What system is this library using to classify its books?

a. Search engine system

b. Dewey decimal system

c. Business database system

d. Library of Congress system

Self-Check Answer Key

1. You will better meet your customer's needs.

Explanation: When you are able to quickly and accurately find the information you or your customers are looking for, the organization grows and prospers.

Reference: Section 2.1

2. Pictures

Explanation: Raw facts, such as letters, numbers, symbols, or pictures are combined or organized into resources so that people in your organization can learn from them.

Reference: Section 2.1

3. Workstation manual

Explanation: While each of these manuals are valuable to employees, the workstation manual is specialized for the particular role. It likely contains a position overview and responsibilities of that position.

Reference: Section 2.2

4. Quick-list files

Explanation: It's likely that all of these manuals address some commonly asked questions, but the quick-list file is one that you create and would have quick access to.

Reference: Section 2.2

5. Consult the instruction manual.

Explanation: The instruction manual may offer some helpful

troubleshooting information. It should be referenced before buying a replacement printer or contacting the printer manufacturer.

Reference: Section 2.2

6. Job descriptions

   Explanation: Well-written job descriptions should identify the position's qualifications and responsibilities. Keeping them up to date in ever-changing organizations is a good idea.

   Reference: Section 2.2

7. Human resources

   Explanation: Management may write some of the policies and lawyers often review the policies to ensure they comply with federal and state laws. However, human resources departments typically organize and maintain policy manuals.

   Reference: Section 2.2

8. Many employees will read them and rely on them.

   Explanation: Since the procedures will be used by many people with varying skill level, it's best to keep the procedures simple so that everyone can follow them. Remember that although the procedure should be easy to read, it should also be detailed enough so that the person reading it can perform the job.

   Reference: Section 2.2

9. Dictionary

Explanation: Dictionaries are the most commonly used reference material. Because language is constantly changing, be sure to consider the year of publication for accuracy.

Reference: Section 2.3

10. Style guide

Explanation: A style guide will be the best source for learning the difference between "affect" and "effect." A dictionary can also help you find the answer.

Reference: Section 2.3

11. A city directory

Explanation: City directories can help you research an unfamiliar city as well as provide insight to local neighborhoods.

Reference: Section 2.3

12. Bookmark the supplier's website.

Explanation: Since you'll need to look up the most current information whenever your boss asks for it, the best idea is to bookmark the website so you can get to it quickly the next time you need to. Your boss will appreciate your quick response.

Reference: Section 2.3

13. Office professional handbooks

Explanation: Many office professionals find valuable information

in office reference manuals in regards to email, communications techniques, other administrative responsibilities.

Reference: Section 2.3

14. The person's contact information and area of expertise

Explanation: Knowing who to ask which kind of questions is a great time-saver in any organization.

Reference: Section 2.3

15. A geographical reference

Explanation: Many sources on the Internet can provide weather, transportation, and travel conditions for cities around the world.

Reference: Section 2.3

16. Bing

Explanation: The Internet is constantly evolving and changing. Remember that you should still make sure the search results you receive are credible.

Reference: Section 2.4

17. Is the website an opinion site or does it give facts?

Explanation: Evaluating the information you get on the Internet is important because you could be seeing false information. Information found on the Internet is only as good as the source that provided it.

Reference: Section 2.4

18. A business database

    Explanation: Business databases have information about companies, people, and products. The library's website should have a list of the databases you can use to search on the client.
    Reference: Section 2.4

19. Ebooks

    Explanation: Ebooks can be found in the online catalog. Keep in mind that not every book will be available as an ebook.
    Reference: Section 2.4

20. Dewey decimal system

    Explanation: The Dewey decimal system uses numbers to classify library resources, while the Library of Congress system uses letters.
    Reference: Section 2.4

Flash Cards

1. Term: Raw Facts

Definition: Data that has not yet been organized in a meaningful way

2. Term: Policy Manual

Definition: A collection of guidelines for an organization

3. Term: Procedures Manual

Definition: Step-by-step instructions for employees to follow when they perform their jobs; also known as an employee handbook or staff manual

4. Term: Job Description

Definition: The duties of a specific job within an organization

5. Term: Workstation Manual

Definition: Collection of information pertaining to a specific job

6. Term: Instruction Manual

Definition: Document produced by a manufacturer to assist with installation, routine maintenance, and troubleshooting of minor problems with equipment or computer software

7. Term: Quick-list File

Definition: A list of frequently requested information

8. Term: Dictionary

Definition: A resource of word definitions, pronunciations, and usage

9. Term: Abridged Dictionary

Definition: A condensed version of a dictionary

10. Term: Thesaurus

Definition: A resource of words and their synonyms, antonyms, and related phrases

11. Term: Style Guide

Definition: A resource with guidelines for formatting and editing

12. Term: Dewey Decimal System

Definition: Numerical system for classifying library materials

13. Term: Library of Congress System

Definition: System for grouping library items using letters

14. Term: Search Engine

Definition: A web-based tool that searches the Internet using the specific word(s) you enter

15. Term: City Directory

Definition: A resource with listings of residents' names, addresses, telephone numbers, and occupations