Desk Based Research

What you will need
- Access to the internet
- Access to a library
- A lot of patience!
- If you require any extra support or help please email The People's Panel. Peoples.Panel@southampton.gov.uk

Instruction Guide
- Decide on what you want to research. This will be your focus.
- Read around the subject. Research recycling as a whole or the broader area around your key focus.
- Use libraries, journals, University libraries, websites, newspapers and pretty much everything you can find to research your key focus.
- Draw up a comprehensive bibliography. This is where you will put all of your references. Any website, book or journal you have used should be put in here. Do not leave this until the end. Do it as you go, if you don't you will regret it.
- Evaluate your information and resources. A lot of what is on the internet is good information, however there is some which is not trustworthy. Bias is a common problem and one that you need to be aware of. Check information and data that you find.
- Google scholar is often a good place to find journals, but don't pay for them. Try and use the free ones.

Safety Considerations
- Do not give out personal information
- Do not pay for anything online such as access to a site or in general.

Where do you put your information?
- The worksheets below are for guidance and you do not have to use them
- Use the link below to upload any information or documents you have
- Make sure you upload the document and fill in all the boxes
- You will have to upload all of the documents separately, however when you click submit a new page will automatically open.
- If you only have one document just close the new pages that has been opened.

https://southamptoncitycouncil.researchfeedback.net/wh/s.asp?k=145866224523

Easy Bibliography Recording Sheet

Books

Author Surname	Author Initials	Publication Date (Year)	Title (underlined or *italics*)	Publisher	Place	Pages Used
,	.	( )		;	.	(pp.)
,	.	( )		;	.	(p.)
,	.	( )		;	.	(p.)

Example: Mortimer-Dunn, G. (1973) *Fashion Design.* Rigby Limited; Adelaide. (p. 23–45)

Internet

Author Surname	Author Initials	Publication Date (Year)	Title (underlined or *italics*)	Retrieved Date (Month, Day, Year)	Website URL
,	.	. ( )			
,	.	. ( )			
,	.	. ( )			

Example: Nixon, J. (2005) *Alice Springs Beanie Festival.* Retrieved March 28, 2006 from: http://www.beaniefest.org

People's panel

Research Ideas Worksheet

Research Topic: _____

Write your research aim in this box:

Write down the questions you want to try and answer through your research:

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Note Taking Worksheet

For the resources that you are using you can fill in the below to try and focus the areas that are important.

List of key words:

Case Study: Location (and basic information about that area e.g. population, demographics etc.).

Items currently being recycled in this area:

Policies/interventions undertaken to improve recycling/reduce waste:

Current reported recycling problems in this area

Budgets – What information is available about what is spent/saved on recycling?

Tonnage – Information on tonnage per head recycled

Is there information on people's views on recycling?

Other important notes:

Describe the regular storage that is provide:

Citizen Recycling Research – Desk based research

You can use the Note Taking Worksheet provided to structure your research. These worksheets you can then be attached to the survey (link provided at the bottom of this sheet) or you can send them into the Civic Centre (again the address is provided). The information you collect will then be moved onto an excel spreadsheet at a later date for analysis. Another way of carrying this out is to upload your information directly using the link provided.

First:

Decide on what area you want to research. This could be an area you know well or one that you have just started researching. The area or cases you look at can be wherever you like; you do not have to limit it to this country.

Second:

Once you have decided on an area, use the guides provided to help you conduct research effectively. To make the task slightly easier we have broken down what you are looking for into sections. These sections are:

- Items being currently recycled
- Policies/interventions undertaken to improve recycling/reduce waste
- Current reported recycling problems
- Budgets (what is being spent/saved on recycling)
- Tonnage (how much is recycled per head)
- Storage (how is the recycling stored by residents)
- Is there information on views on recycling
- Other information

Research the chosen area or case and see if you can find the information for each section.

If you cannot find all of the information

Do not worry! Not all of the places you will look at will have all of the information. Find whatever you can, but just remember some of the information may not exist. It is a good idea to note how you tried to find information if you can't find any.

Third:

You may want to study more than one place or case. If you do, please complete a separate Note Taking Worksheet or enter the information onto a separate survey.

Citizen Recycling researchers - what now?

If possible, upload the answers to **https://southamptoncitycouncil.researchfeedback.net/wh/s.asp?k=1458662 24523**

If you have any questions or concerns please email Peoples.Panel@southampton.gov.uk

Citizen Science Recycling Desk based Research

What is desk based research?

Desk based research, also known as secondary research, involves the summary, collation and combination of existing research. Primary research is where scientists (like you) will collect the data themselves usually through experimentation or fieldwork (see Crouch and Housden, 2003). Literature reviews would also be classed as secondary or desk based research, although there often is a subtle difference. For most, secondary research involves looking for reports, statistical summaries and journals that provide information on a topic. These are all incredibly important sources, however there may not be as much information contained in these sources for some modern questions. For that reason internet resources and magazine/newspaper reports may well take on a greater importance. This is not to downplay the usefulness of journals and reports as importance should still be placed in these assets. The range of different ideas about recycling and barriers to recycling, may mean that talking to various organisations could also be vital. Below is a table showing where common sources of information can be found (and the nature of the information). The list below is not exhaustive and often resources can be found in multiple areas.

Source	Possible information that could be found
Internal data within organisations (e.g. both the council and University of Southampton)	Current recycling programs, recycling data (on habits), journals on environmental impacts, official statistics
Libraries	Journals, newspapers, directories, reports, government statistics, industry statistics
Internet	Recycling websites, articles, newspaper reports, government statistics, population statistics, lists of companies that recycle, campaign groups, advocacy groups
Magazine/newspapers	Statistics, report excerpts, journals excerpts, interviews, "breaking news",
Recycling organisations	Industry statistics, possible lists of members, technical papers, reports, informed opinions

(Adapted from www.b2binternational.com)

Finding secondary data is only one small part of desk based research. It is often easy to find a great deal of information, knowing what to do with it and how to interpret it is a vital skill when dealing with any sort of research. When gathering and analysing any information or data that you have found, there are generally agreed key criteria which must be adhered to. It has strong links to the idea of a systematic review. A systematic review just means working in an ordered way to review a lot of information. Strictly all researchers will work systematically so that everything that needs to be considered, is (Jesson et al 2011).

1. Choose a topic
2. Searching for the information
3. Gathering information/data

4. Evaluate, evaluate, evaluate
5. Cite your sources

(Adapted from umkc.edu/research, 2014)

What makes desk based research effective?

1. Choose a topic: Fortunately the overarching topic has already been selected by Southampton Council, University of Southampton and the citizen scientists who were involved in the project. However the subject of recycling itself is incredibly broad and for that reason you may well want to research a certain area from a particular angle. It is important that you have some broad knowledge of the topic before doing this though, otherwise the research may be hard to understand. E.g. Considering possible schemes that have worked elsewhere may be your area of research, but knowing about recycling as a whole may help you to understand acronyms and industry specific terms.

2. Searching for the information: This is more difficult than you may expect and the easiest way to tackle this is to break it down. First you will need to identify the main ideas you want to look at. Then it would be a good idea to come up with alternative search terms or words that may open up more information. Recycling might be called reclamation or reprocessing depending on the area in which you are looking.

3. Gathering information/data: Use the search guidelines you have created for yourself and farm as much information as you can. The more you find, the more chance you have of getting something that is useful and helps to answer your question. Don't expect the answer to come up top of the list on your first google search! Search by combining key terms rather than looking for a definitive answer to your question. It is rare you will find all the information in one place. Sometimes you have to synthesise data, opinions and facts to fully answer your question. It can be, that in an entire report, there is only one sentence that is useful, but it could just be the most important piece of information that you find. Perseverance is vital at this stage.

4. Evaluate, evaluate, and evaluate: Whether you are using the internet or newspaper reports, never take "facts" at face value. Check what you find. Note down any bias that may be present. Just because something is biased doesn't mean you that the information isn't correct or useful, however you need to check it hasn't be distorted or something key hasn't been omitted. Academic journals, have likely gone through a peer review process and <u>should</u> be relatively free of bias. Notice the word should - rather than will. Just because it is printed in a journal doesn't mean it hasn't been refuted.

5. Cite your sources!!! Nothing is more frustrating than finding a key piece of research that is hugely beneficial and forgetting where you got it from. So that plagiarism is avoided and you have a list for your own benefit to justify claims, cite the resources whilst you research. As I wrote this, I added to a bibliography of sources at the bottom of my page which when I found more information. At the end I can reorganise and normalise it all.

Where do I start to look?

Libraries;

Libraries often have a ready to use source of information on different topics. This should present a firm foundation for reading around the subject. Remember that different libraries will have a range of emphases. University or academic libraries are more like to hold government and academic papers, however with that often comes an expected level of knowledge (dobney.com). That is why local libraries can be a fantastic place to start. They can give you more of an overview on a subject, allowing you to frame the research you want to do. Another great resource is the librarian. Don't expect them to be the font of all knowledge, however they could be a fantastic resource for pointing you in the right direction.

The Internet;

The internet is also a powerful tool when used effectively. First of all, it will have a back-catalogue of newspaper and magazine articles. All you have to do is find them. The principle of conducting research on the internet differ very little from any other sort of desk based research. Use sites that have links to other sites to help you find more information; the more trustworthy the links, the more trustworthy the original webpage could be. If nothing else, the internet can provide instant information that can spark the rest of your research and can be used as a giant database for newspapers, journals and magazines. Also use contact information that you find on the internet to follow up any enquiries you have.

Use google scholar. If you are looking for journals then google scholar is a brilliant resource. Google scholar is a specific offshoot of the google search engine. It searches only for academic papers and journals. Some you have to pay for but a lot are free.

Pitfalls of Desk based research:

- Quality of researcher: When you conduct any sort of research there are always pitfalls and dangers to be avoided. If you have personally collected some information from the primary source then you can be sure of the quality and reliability of the data. Working with secondary data means you have no idea about the quality of the researcher. This is why evaluating and checking data is so important

- Sheer quantity of information: There is enough information to keep you reading for hundreds of lifetimes. You need to be selective and understand you cannot possibly digest it all. Neither should you believe you are going to completely solve all the problems or barriers with recycling. You are simply providing information to try and help inform arguments and influence decisions. That is why a citizen science team work together to synthesise info.

- Incomplete information: Some of the research you find will only include snippets of required information. A partial report of a study could be misleading if taken at face value so be very careful. If you are asked to pay for an entire journal, I would advise not to. There will be other information out there for you to use for free and some

people in the team may be able to access different information through subscriptions of organisations they work with.

- Not timely: Check dates on all of the information you find. A recycling study carried out in the 1980s may have some ideas which can be assessed, but the data may not be all that useful. You need to be assessing how useful all the information you find actually is.
- Bias: Anyone, and I mean anyone, can post something on the internet and claim it to be fact. Sometimes this is harmless or done accidently, however you need to keep an eye out for bias and data being used erroneously.

(Adapted from knowthis.com, What is Secondary Research? (2016))

Advantages and Disadvantages of desk based research

Advantages

- Saves time – A lot of research already exists. Don't spend time reinventing the wheel.
- Accessibility – With the dawn of the internet, more data and information is easily accessible. Sometimes it can bring up information that otherwise you wouldn't have access to
- Helps to make the unfeasible, feasible – If you wanted information on an international level or over a large scale of time secondary data can be useful.
- Generates new ideas and drives discovery – Other analyses and data can lead to unexpected discoveries.
- Clarification – Secondary research can help to identify problems, factors that can be improved or areas of focus within the research question.

Disadvantages

- Appropriateness of data **–** Not all data is created equally. Most primary data is collected with a focus in mind, such as a research question. Just because that is similar does not mean that the information that you gather is appropriate or useful. Also certain data may have been collected and refuted since it was published.
- Bias – Some of what is collected will be biased and should be treated very carefully.
- Data quality – You cannot control the quality of the data that has been collected and therefore this can affect your research.

(Adapted from Fàbregues, (2013) & knowit.com Secondary Research - Advantages (2016))

In Summary

Secondary data is vital. We use the ideas, writings, data, musings and opinions of experts and first-hand testimonies all the time. When drawing together all the information gathered through our own primary citizen science research, comparing it to the secondary data that is already out there will allow us synthesise our discoveries with ones that have already been uncovered. Your research may well help to clarify the research question further and go a long

way to help to answer it. Secondary research can also pave the way for more research, uncover further questions and focus certain areas of the project.

Dos and Don'ts of desk based research

- Do look for a varied amount of data. This might mean looking at different media or finding information from various resources
- Do question everything.
- Do check what you find out with other areas.
- Do use studies that are already out there. If people have done some of the work for you, then enjoy that fact and use it.
- Do use the bibliography of research papers to give you more places to look
- Don't forget to copy down where you found the information.
- Don't dive straight in without a clear idea
- Don't lose sight of the objectives.
- Don't take data at face value. Check it and don't just accept what the internet says.

For more guidance please see the 10 commandments of Desk based research

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