

## REFERENCE SOURCES

L. No.	Title of the Lesson	Skills	Activity
7	Reference Sources	Information Gathering, Sorting and Organisation, Effective Communication, Problem Solving and Decision Making	Searching information as required by users, Interacting with reference sources in libraries/internet

### **Summary**

A Reference Source is usually a document, physical or digital, that you would 'refer' to for more information about a topic. They are typically information-dense and factual, written as unbiased as possible. You can find these resources in print and online.

We use reference books (also called reference or background sources, or resources) to get quick specific facts or information or an overview of a subject.

These sources generally summarize topics or assist in finding secondary literature. Their purpose is to provide background information, short answers to simple questions, or to help you find other sources. They are also great for quick facts, statistics, or contact information, and can be very useful for getting specific information on a topic.

They can be a great starting point for research. After doing a little reading about a topic in an encyclopaedia or other reference source, you can have a better idea of how to focus your topic and where to look for further information.

Most print reference sources cannot be issued out from the library. However, online reference sources are available on the websites and can be accessed from anywhere. Online reference materials are consulted the same way as print reference materials; they contain specific pieces of information and are not usually read from cover to cover.

Ready reference items include dictionaries, encyclopaedias, collections of quick facts, statistics, quotations and other information that can be quickly looked at for answers.

### Principal Points

- A reference source provides answers to questions, statistical information, background information, or directs one to an additional information source. The reference sources are standard works that one can use to locate specific types of information.
- Reference sources comprise dictionaries, encyclopaedias, yearbooks, almanacs, handbooks, manuals, directories, geographical and biographical information sources.
- Dictionaries define the words and encyclopaedias provide background information about the words. There are unabridged, abridged, collegiate, desk, pocket and children's dictionaries. Subject dictionaries provide definition of the words in a given subject area.
- Special dictionaries deal with linguistic or literary aspect of the words or with special types of words. Bilingual and multilingual dictionaries are translating dictionaries.
- Encyclopaedias are of two types viz. general encyclopaedia and subject encyclopaedias. An encyclopaedia may be in a single volume or a multivolume set.
- Yearbooks and almanacs trace previous years' events and developments in a country or all the countries of the world. Both, yearbooks and almanacs depend on government sources for statistical data.
- Handbooks contain practical information on a subject and are used by engineers and practitioners in their day-to-day work.
- A manual is a book of instruction providing step-by-step instructions on how to do a particular job or operate a particular machine.
- A directory is a book listing names and addresses of people and organizations.
- Geographical information sources comprise maps, atlases and globes, gazetteers and guide books.
- Maps identify and locate geographic features of the earth's surface like mountains, lakes, forests, rivers etc.
- A gazetteer lists names of places, seas, mountains, rivers and other geographical entities of a particular area.
- Guide books are designed for the travellers to provide handy and practical information for a particular place.
- Biographical information sources are publications providing biographical details of famous people.



### Build your Understanding

Reference sources are usually referred to as sources which are to be 'looked up' rather than read from beginning to end.

It is a tool that people use to find information about a topic.

These sources provide a representation based upon which we proceed with retrieval of information from another sources- primary or secondary.

### What's



1. Reference sources are designed to be consulted rather than read through. Reference materials can be arranged alphabetically, topically, or chronologically.
2. Reference sources can be a great place to start any research because they provide quick, authoritative introductions to a topic. They offer summarized, factual information in a clear and organized way.
3. Common reference sources that provide this type of information are encyclopaedias and dictionaries.
4. Printed Reference collection are usually located by the Reference Desk at each large library.



1. Reference sources are tools that the libraries developed in order to facilitate access to a body of literature, subject domain, or serve special populations of users.
2. Reference sources are created by individuals or collective effort like committees, editorial boards, commercial sector, etc. Commercial vendors develop these sources and sell them for the use of libraries and information organisations.
3. Arrangement of reference collections is usually according to frequency of use, format or classified.
4. Most of the reference books have indexes. Using the index will assist your search for information by providing a listing of all the pages that discuss your topic with the reference work.
5. Before using a reference source, carefully evaluate the source. For this use a TRAP (Timeliness, Reliability, Authority and Purpose) to evaluate material for quality.
6. Traditionally developed and available in print format, the reference sources are increasingly being made available in electronic format. This enables increasing sophistication of the end-user in searching and accessing information.

### **Extend your Horizon**

Visit the Reference section of a large public library. Pick up one title each of a dictionary, encyclopaedia, yearbook, almanac, handbook, manual and biographical source. Write down the title, name of the publisher and date of publication of each source.

### **Evaluate Yourself**

1. Enumerate criteria that differentiate a special dictionary from a general dictionary.
2. List the characteristics of reference books.
3. Define a handbook and give two examples of any handbooks.
4. What purpose do directories serve ? List different types of directories.