AN INSIGHT INTO STUDY SKILLS FOR STUDENTS

Part 2

Accessing and Managing sources of information

In this second part of the MIDIRS study skills for students we shall explore a variety of sources that will help you in your studies. Learning to accurately source information and accurately reference what you find will not only help you in current studies but will lay the foundations for lifelong learning. You will be expected to use a wide range of information sources comprising libraries, the internet and specialist information centres.

University libraries are freely available for students as are most Trust libraries. Local public libraries may have limited use for specialised professions whereas the British Library in London at the other end of the spectrum may be of use if searching for rare or particular specialised information.

It is advisable to study the recommended reading in the course handbook for each module as you start researching and ask the module leader for specific recommendations. As books can be very expensive to buy it would be worth checking if the recommended texts are available from the library. If so, try to borrow them quite early on as the number may be limited and could soon be on loan to other students when you need them.

The internet is fast becoming one of the main sources of obtaining information and evidence based research. Information can be sourced from many databases such as OVID, CINAHL and MEDLINE. Publications such as e-journals, social policies, government publications are now readily available through the internet. The internet is now usually the place to search when looking for specialist information for particular groups i.e. Women’s aid.

Traditional dictionaries and the Thesaurus are still useful editions to a students’ personal library including the Ballière’s Midwives dictionary (2012).
**Books and Journals**

Books are an excellent source of information for background knowledge or areas of midwifery that do not generally change as rapidly as contemporary evidence-based research such as biology. However, when using books it is important to access the latest edition to ensure the literature is contemporary.

Journals on the other hand, are becoming more readily available as online editions and are published frequently usually monthly or quarterly giving access to the latest research in a particular topic area.

**MIDIRS Digest** is unique in providing not only original articles but also a wide variety of articles from a range of journals in the form of reprinted material and reviewed abstracts. The reviewed abstracts can help a student decide whether the full article will be relevant to them. This also applies to the reference database which again gives wide scope of abstracts summarising the content of the particular piece of research.

**Referencing**

We briefly mentioned referencing in part 1. Here we discuss a little more in depth. You may wonder why we reference our work at all; it is an academic piece of literature which may ultimately add to the body of knowledge already known about a topic. Therefore we need to demonstrate the evidence to support enhancing the quality of the argument. It will also engage a scholarly and professional approach to the work whereby other researchers can explore the evidence. By appropriately referencing the work we are helping to avoid the risk of plagiarism.

The reference needs to be written in your own words i.e. paraphrased the original source, including author and year of publication needs to be included in the text. If paraphrasing is not appropriate then any quote used must be contained within quotation marks and the page number of the quote must be included with the author’s name and year of publication.

It will take practice to become proficient at accurately referencing, however, get into the habit of checking for consistency, correct citing of authors in alphabetical order and correct punctuation.

**Harvard or Vancouver**

Harvard and Vancouver are the two most common styles of referencing, with the majority of British universities adopting the Harvard style. Harvard cites the names of the authors in the text followed by the year of publication, full references listed at the end of the piece of work. The Vancouver style is represented in the text by numbers which are then presented in numerical order in the list at the end of the article.

The format of referencing also differs slightly dependent upon whether you are citing a book, journal, electronic sources, conference proceedings or government documents.

This is a very simplified explanation of referencing as different universities may have slight variations so it is imperative that you consult your own university study skills pack to enable you to become conversant with their style. If you began using the recommended style from day one it will soon become the norm to reference accurately within your work.

**Summary**

We are very fortunate to live in an age of modern technology where information is at our fingertips, so readily available. This also raises the standard of your work as you can source a wide range of literature allowing for an excellent critical argument within your assignment which must be written to a consistently high standard encompassing correct spelling and grammar demonstrating knowledge and pride in your work. Most assignments are now submitted electronically, so no excuse for poor handwriting. A note of caution when sourcing literature through the internet ensure that it is from reliable and credible sources, dubious references will not make high quality assignments.

As midwives we strive to achieve the highest standards of care we can give to the women and families we meet and support through one of the most important times of their lives and this high standard should be reflected in all aspects of our work including academia.