

LiSS Podcast 2

(Intro)

This is LiSS podcast number 2.

Titled, 'Introduction to finding and using information for your assignments' podcast by James Fraser.

For further details go to www.cumbria.ac.uk/liiss

(Main Body of text)

Hello my name is James Fraser and I'm a learning Adviser at the University of Cumbria. In terms of information gathering there are a few things to think about when you are first given your assignment. It's a good idea to start gathering your information as soon as possible, it always takes longer than you think and it's good to avoid those feelings of panic because you've left things too late. If you've got a reading list from your tutor, you can use the library catalogue to try and find the books on the shelves or on the computer if they are ebooks. One way to help yourself to get higher marks is to try and go beyond your reading list and show your lecturers that you have shown some initiative. It's good to show evidence in your bibliographies that you have used a wide range of information sources, for example; books, journal articles, good quality websites and maybe some newspaper articles. I just mentioned websites, there is a lot of information available from the web and perhaps a person's first instinct is to go straight to Google and type in the title of the assignment, however, this usually results in hundreds of thousands if not millions of hits, most of which will be of dubious quality.

I know that later in this podcast series we will look at the issue of evaluating information to help you make sure that the information you choose is of appropriate quality for university work. Instead of going straight to Google there are some things you can do before you even turn your computer on. Some questions that you could ask yourself in the first stages are; firstly, how much information do I need? This will often be determined by the length of your assignment, if your essay is a thousand words long you won't need as many references as if it was five thousand words long. However, there are no hard or fast rules about how many items should be in your bibliography and if you are in any doubt you should talk to your lecturers. It is better to have a few good references from books and journal articles and sources that are trustworthy than loads of references from poor sources like Wikipedia or commercial websites.

The second question to ask yourself is 'what kind of information do I need'? Do you need facts and figures or do you need thoughts and opinions on a topic? Different sources of information will give you different kinds of information, for example encyclopaedias and textbooks will give you factual information, whereas scholarly books and journal articles will often provide a theoretical overview of a topic. Lecturers like you to use journal articles for your assignments for a variety of reasons, but mainly but they contain up-to-date information and the articles themselves are written by specialists who are qualified to a high level in their subject areas.

The next instalment in this series will look in detail about how to go about finding good journal articles for your assignment.

(Outro)

For further details on this podcast and to listen to others in the series please visit www.cumbria.ac.uk/liiss