



Research methods for business students

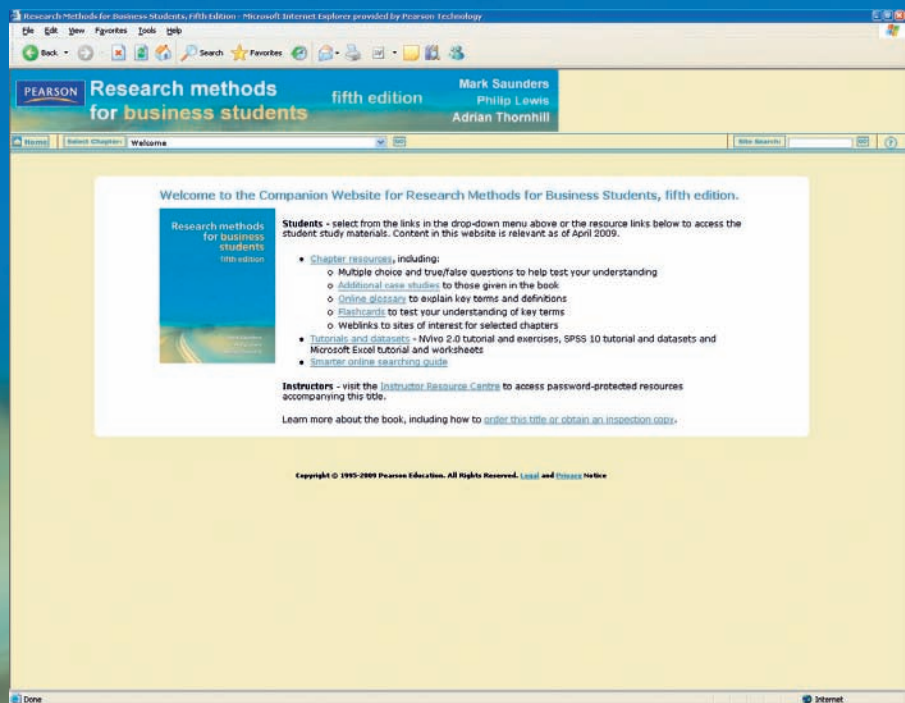
fifth edition

Mark Saunders
Philip Lewis
Adrian Thornhill

Research Methods for Business Students

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Research Methods for **Business** **Students**

Fifth edition

Mark Saunders
Philip Lewis
Adrian Thornhill

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Supporting resources

Visit www.pearsoned.co.uk/saunders to find valuable online resources:

Companion Website for students

- Multiple choice questions to test your learning.
- Tutorials on Excel, NVivo and SPSS.
- Updated research datasets to practice with.
- Updated additional case studies with accompanying questions.
- Smarter Online Searching Guide – how to make the most of the Internet in your research.

For instructors

- Complete, downloadable Instructor's Manual.
- PowerPoint slides that can be downloaded and used for presentations.

Also – the regularly maintained Companion Website provides the following features:

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How to use this book

This book is written with a progressive logic, which means that terms and concepts are defined when they are first introduced. One implication of this is that it is sensible for you to start at the beginning and to work your way through the text, various boxes, self-check questions, review and discussion questions, case studies and case study questions. You can do this in a variety of ways depending on your reasons for using this book. However, this approach may not necessarily be suitable for your purposes, and you may wish to read the chapters in a different order or just dip into particular sections of the book. If this is true for you then you will probably need to use the glossary to check that you understand some of the terms and concepts used in the chapters you read. Suggestions for three of the more common ways in which you might wish to use this book are given below.

As part of a research methods course or for self-study for your research project

If you are using this book as part of a research methods course the order in which you read the chapters is likely to be prescribed by your tutors and dependent upon their perceptions of your needs. Conversely, if you are pursuing a course of self-study for your research project, dissertation or consultancy report, the order in which you read the chapters is your own choice. However, whichever of these you are, we would argue that the order in which you read the chapters is dependent upon your recent academic experience.

For many students, such as those taking an undergraduate degree in business or management, the research methods course and associated project, dissertation or consultancy report comes in either the second or the final year of study. In such situations it is probable that you will follow the chapter order quite closely (see Figure P.1). Groups of chapters within which we believe you can switch the order without affecting the logic of the flow too much are shown on the same level in this diagram and are:

- those chapters associated with data collection (Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11);
- those associated with data analysis (Chapters 12 and 13).

In addition, you might wish to read the sections in Chapter 14 on writing prior to starting to draft your critical review of the literature (Chapter 3).

Alternatively, you may be returning to academic study after a gap of some years, to take a full-time or part-time course such as a Master of Business Administration, a Master of Arts or a Master of Science with a Business and Management focus. Many students in such situations need to refresh their study skills early in their programme, particularly those associated with critical reading of academic literature and academic writing. If you feel the need to do this, you may wish to start with those chapters that support you in

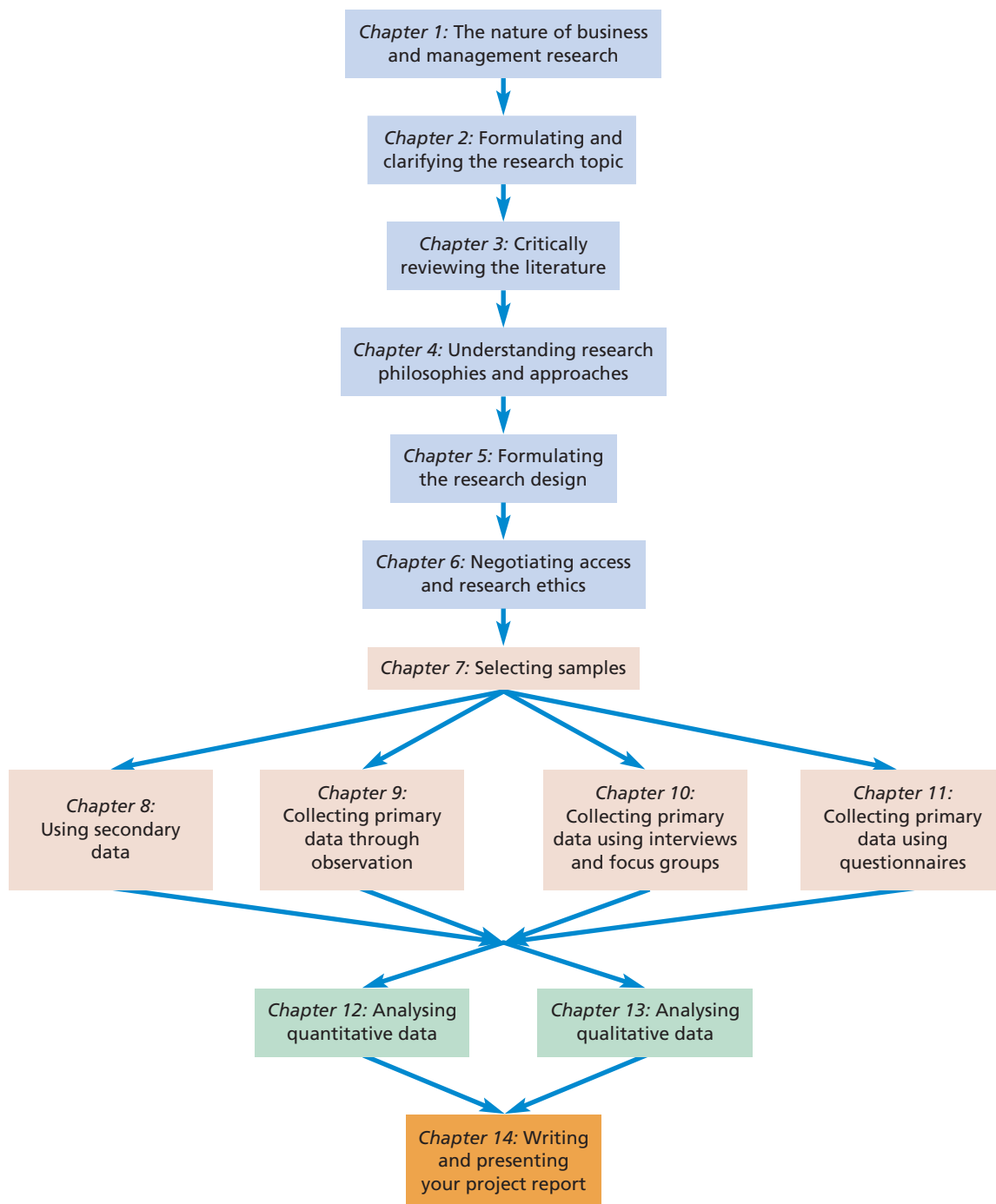


Figure P.1 Using this book in your second or final year of study

developing and refining these skills (Chapters 3 and 14), followed by Chapter 8, which introduces you to the range of secondary data sources available that might be of use for other assignments (Figure P.2). Once again, groups of chapters within which we believe you can switch the order without affecting the logic of the flow too much are shown on

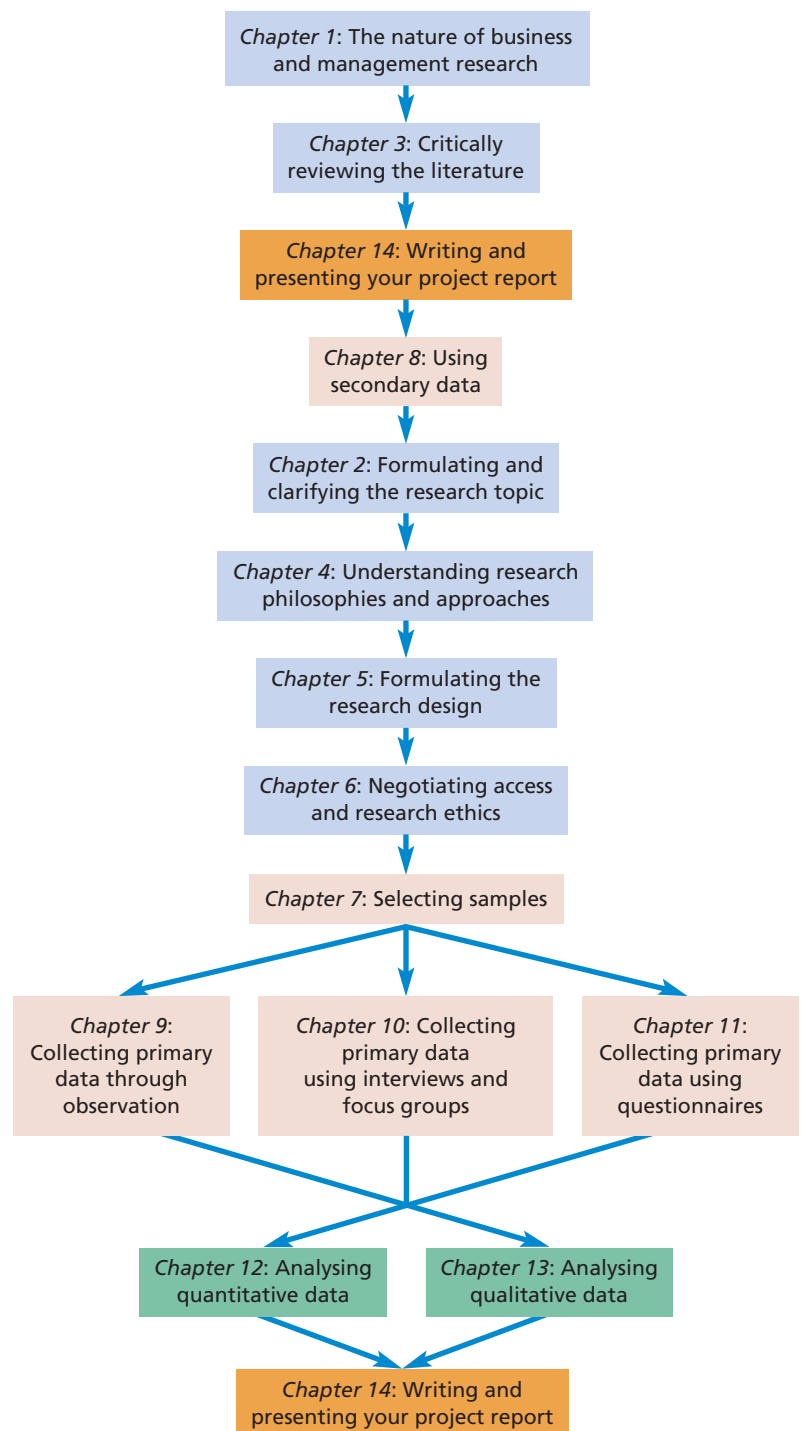


Figure P.2 Using this book as a new returner to academic study

the same level in the diagram and are:

- those chapters associated with primary data collection (Chapters 9, 10 and 11);
- those associated with data analysis (Chapters 12 and 13).

In addition, we would recommend that you re-read Chapter 14 prior to starting to write your project report, dissertation or consultancy report.

Whichever order you choose to read the chapters in, we would recommend that you attempt all the self-check questions, review and discussion questions and those questions associated with the case studies. Your answers to the self-check questions can be self-assessed using the answers at the end of each chapter. However, we hope that you will actually have a go at each question prior to reading the answer! If you need further information on an idea or a technique, then first look at the references in the further reading section.

At the end of Chapters 2–14 the section headed ‘Progressing your research project’ lists a number of tasks. Such tasks might involve you in just planning a research project or, alternatively, designing and administering a questionnaire of your own. When completed, these tasks will provide a useful *aide-mémoire* for assessed work and can be used as the basis for the first draft of your project report. It is worth pointing out here that many consultancy reports for organisations do not require you to include a review of the academic literature.

As a guide through the research process

If you are intending to use this book to guide you through the research process for a research project you are undertaking, such as your dissertation, we recommend that you read the entire book quickly before starting your research. In that way you will have a good overview of the entire process, including the range of techniques available, and will be better able to plan your work.

After you have read the book once, we suggest that you work your way through the book again following the chapter order. This time you should attempt the self-check questions, review and discussion questions and those questions associated with each case study to ensure that you have understood the material contained in each chapter prior to applying it to your own research project. Your responses to self-check questions can be assessed using the answers at the end of each chapter.

If you are still unsure as to whether particular techniques, procedures or ideas are relevant, then pay special attention to the ‘focus on student research’, ‘focus on management research’ and ‘focus on research in the news’ boxes. ‘Focus on student research’ boxes are based on actual students’ experiences and illustrate how an issue has been addressed or a technique or procedure used in a student’s research project. ‘Focus on management research’ boxes discuss recent research articles in established refereed academic journals, allowing you to see how research is undertaken successfully. These articles are easily accessible via online databases. ‘Focus on research in the news’ boxes provide topical news stories of how particular research techniques, procedures and ideas are used in the business world. You can also look in the ‘further reading’ for other examples of research where these have been used. If you need further information on an idea, technique or procedure then, again, start with the references in the further reading section.

Material in some of the chapters is likely to prove less relevant to some research topics than others. However, you should beware of choosing techniques because you are happy with them, if they are inappropriate. Completion of the tasks in the section headed ‘Progressing your research project’ at the end of Chapters 2–13 will enable you to generate all the material that you will need to include in your research project, dissertation or

consultancy report. This will also help you to focus on the techniques and ideas that are most appropriate to your research. When you have also completed these tasks for Chapter 14 you will have written your research project, dissertation or consultancy report.

As a reference source

It may be that you wish to use this book now or subsequently as a reference source. If this is the case, an extensive index will point you to the appropriate page or pages. Often you will find a 'checklist' box within these pages. 'Checklist' boxes are designed to provide you with further guidance on the particular topic. You will also find the contents pages and the glossary useful reference sources, the latter defining over 400 research terms. In addition, we have tried to help you to use the book in this way by including cross-references between sections in chapters as appropriate. Do follow these up as necessary. If you need further information on an idea or a technique then begin by consulting the references in the further reading section. Wherever possible we have tried to reference books that are in print and readily available in university libraries.

Guided tour

Chapter 3

Critically reviewing the literature

Learning outcomes

By the end of this chapter you should:

- understand the importance and purpose of the critical literature review to your research project;
- be able to adopt a critical perspective in your reading;
- know what you need to include when writing your critical review;
- be aware of the range of primary, secondary and tertiary literature sources available;
- be able to identify key words and to undertake a literature search using a range of methods;
- be able to evaluate the relevance, value and sufficiency of the literature found;
- be able to reference the literature found accurately;
- understand what is meant by plagiarism;
- be able to apply the knowledge, skills and understanding gained to your own research project.

3.1 Introduction

As part of your studies, you have almost certainly already been asked by your tutors to 'review the literature', 'write a literature review' or 'critically review literature' on topics they have specified. Indeed, you may be like many students and have grown to fear the literature review, not because of the associated reading but because of the requirement both to make judgements as to the value of each piece of work and to organise those ideas and findings that are of value into a review. It is these two processes in particular that people find both difficult and time consuming.

Two major reasons exist for reviewing the literature (Sharp et al. 2002). The first, the preliminary search that helps you to generate and refine your research ideas, has already been discussed in Section 2.1. The second, often referred to as the **critical review or critical literature review**, is part of your research project proper. Most research textbooks, as well as your project

tutor, will argue that this critical review of the literature is necessary. Although you may feel that you already have a good knowledge of your research area, we believe that reviewing the literature is essential. Project assessment criteria usually require you to demonstrate awareness of the current state of knowledge in your subject, its limitations, and how your research fits in this wider context (Gill and Johnson 2002). In Jankiewicz's (2005:161) words:

There is little point in reinventing the wheel . . . the work that you do is not done in a vacuum, but builds on the ideas of other people who have studied the field before you. This requires you describe what has been published, and to marshal the information in a relevant and critical way.

Recently, we were discussing the difficulties students have when writing their literature reviews for their research projects. Mark summarised what he felt we and fellow project tutors were saying:

'So what happens sometimes is . . . a student comes to see their project tutor having obviously done a great deal of work. The student presents the tutor with what they say is the finished literature review. Yet, the purpose of their review is unclear. It is little more than a summary of the articles and books read, each article or book being given one paragraph. Some students have arranged these paragraphs alphabetically in author order, others have arranged them in chronological order. None have linked or juxtaposed the ideas. Their literature reviews look more like adjacent pages from a catalogue rather than a critical review. Just like the items on these pages, each article or book has some similarities in terms of subject matter and so are grouped together. As in the catalogue, the reasons for these groupings are not made explicit. In addition, like the summary descriptions of items on the pages of a home shopping catalogue, each book or article is accorded equal status rather than the amount written reflecting its value to the student's research project.'

He concluded: 'Whilst such an approach obviously makes good sense for a shopping catalogue, it does not work for the



A page from a book catalogue
Source: Pearson Education Ltd

critical review of the literature. We obviously need to explain better what we mean by a critical review of the literature to our students.'

Chapter openers provide a clear and concise introduction to the topics to be covered, together with a list of Learning outcomes that you should have achieved by the end of the chapter.

Attributes of a good research topic

Box 2.1 Focus on student research

Turning ideas into a viable project

Zaynab was not short of ideas for her research. But she was much less sure about how she would move from a topic of interest for her research to a question that could be answered for her research project. It was emphasised to her by her tutors that ideas were easy, turning them into viable research projects was another matter altogether.

Having explored various websites and looked at some publications in the library, she drew up a plan of action which she was sure would give her the material necessary to write her research proposal.

Charting the ideas

At the start her project, Zaynab got a huge sheet of paper to make a map of all of her ideas, questions, associations, sources and lists. She marked her most compelling thoughts in a red. Then she marked the main links to those ideas in that red too. She was careful not to throw out the weaker or related thoughts. She felt this map would help her know the place of all her thoughts. She thought that she could make another map later in the project if she felt there was too much information.

Archive the questions

Next Zaynab recorded who originally asked the question and left a space by each one to record answers or places to look for answers. Then she highlighted the questions that she found most challenging, the ones that really grabbed her attention. She thought that archiving questions would encourage her to articulate them well. Forming thoughts as questions helped her to be clear about what she needed to research.

Blog it

Zaynab was a keen blogger so she posted summaries of her ideas and questions on a weblog. She asked for site visitors to suggest further reading, new research methods or for answers to answer her questions. She received a healthy amount of feedback from which she made real progress in turning favourite ideas into questions that could be answered for her research project.

Thinking about the application of the findings

Zaynab knew that she would be expected to comment on the practical implications of her findings when writing up her research. Therefore, an important part of her plan of action at the outset was to ask herself what would be the implications for practice for the various outcomes that might be expected.

knowledge of the literature, enable you to assess the extent to which your research is likely to provide fresh insights into the topic. Many students believe this is going to be difficult. Fortunately, as pointed out by Phillips and Pugh (2005), there are many ways in which such insight can be defined as 'fresh' (Section 2.5).

If you have already been given a research idea (perhaps by an organisation) you will need to ensure that your questions and objectives relate clearly to the idea (Bryman 1999). It is also important that your topic will have a **symmetry of potential outcomes**: that is, your results will be of similar value whatever you find out (Gill and Johnson 2002). Without this symmetry you may spend a considerable amount of time researching your topic only to find an answer of little importance. Whatever the outcome, you need to ensure you have the scope to write an interesting project report.

Finally, it is important to consider your career goals (Creswell 2002). If you wish to become an expert in a particular subject area or industry sector, it is sensible to use the opportunity to develop this expertise.

It is almost inevitable that the extent to which these attributes apply to your research topic will depend on your topic and the reasons for which you are undertaking the

Case 12: Small business owner managers' skill sets

Case 12 Small business owner managers' skill sets

Since arriving at university, Ibmahel had become increasingly interested in small business. He had taken all the modules concerned with Small Business and Entrepreneurship and chosen to answer a question about small business owner managers for his research project.

How important do small business owner managers consider the different skill sets needed to run a small business and why?

Although the project tutor had felt Ibmahel's question needed more refinement and suggested that he needed to read widely before collecting any data, Ibmahel was pleased with his research question and his method. During his reading to prepare his research proposal he had come across a paper by Brown et al. (2006) in the journal *Accounting Forum*. This included, as an appendix, the questions Brown and colleagues had asked small business managers in their questionnaire. He had decided to adapt some of these questions for his own Internet-mediated questionnaire that he administered to small business managers including:

Importance of skills	Not important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Very important
1. A deep knowledge and experience in your skills in the following areas?												
Accounting and finance												
Marketing												
Human resources												
Business planning												
Business law												
Customer service												
Business operations												
Business development												
Business strategy												
Business ethics												
Business communication												
Business information systems												
Business innovation												
Business risk management												
Business sustainability												
Business social responsibility												
Business environmental management												
Business governance												
Business security												
Business compliance												
Business reputation management												
Business crisis management												
Business disaster recovery												
Business continuity planning												
Business resilience												
Business recovery planning												
Business risk assessment												
Business risk mitigation												
Business risk monitoring												
Business risk reporting												
Business risk communication												
Business risk culture												
Business risk awareness												
Business risk training												
Business risk assessment												
Business risk mitigation												
Business risk monitoring												
Business risk reporting												
Business risk communication												
Business risk culture												
Business risk awareness												
Business risk training												

Source: question layout created by SurveyMonkey.com (2008), Portland, Oregon, USA, authorisation: Ryan Feinley. Reproduced with permission.

In his initial analysis, Ibmahel used SPSS to produce a set of descriptive statistics for each of his questions. For questions three and four these were:

Practical illustrations bring to life some of the issues and challenges you will encounter during your course and beyond. These include short Focus on student research and longer Cases.

Planning your literature search strategy

Box 3.8
Focus on management research

Using an archival research method in the framework for conducting and evaluating research

In one of the most recently read articles from the *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Sinuata (2007) uses a sophisticated method of literature review in a review of supply chain management. The article argues that there is a growing need for integrating environmentally sound choices into supply chain management research and practice. The author peruses the literature and concludes that a 'broad frame of reference for green supply-chain management (GSCM) is not adequately developed and that a succinct classification to help academics, researchers and practitioners in understanding integrated GSCM from a wider perspective is needed. Sinuata covers the literature on GSCM exhaustively from its conceptualisation, primarily taking a 'reverse logistics angle'. Using the rich body of available literature, including earlier reviews that had relatively limited perspectives, the literature on GSCM is classified on the basis of the problem context in supply chains' major influential areas. It is also classified on the basis of methodology and approach adopted. Various mathematical tools/techniques used in literature are also mapped. A timeline indicating relevant papers is also provided as a ready reference.

The literature research is then hybridised/precursor considerations and may be classified as an archival research method in the framework for conducting and evaluating research suggested by Savary and Mentzer (2003). The process of analysis comprises the following steps:

- Defining unit of analysis: the unit of analysis was defined as a single research paper/book.
- Classification context: the classification context to be applied in the literature review to structure and classify the material was selected and defined. There were two contexts: the problem context and methodology/approach context.

- Material evaluation: the material was analysed and sorted according to the classification context. This allowed identification of relevant issues and interpretation of the results. Problem context and related methodology/approaches allowed classification of the reviewed literature. Sinuata argues that this can be derived deductively or inductively.
- Collecting publications and delimiting the field: Sinuata's literature review focuses upon books, edited volumes and journal articles only from 1990. Library databases were used when a keyword search using some important keywords such as 'green supply chain', 'manufacturing', 'green purchasing', 'green design', 'industrial ecology', 'industrial ecosystems', 'RM', 'manufacturing' and 'waste management' were conducted.
- To delimit the number of publications, empirical papers mainly addressing firm-level or specific operational issues were excluded from the review. Similarly highly technical work on topics such as life-cycle assessment, inventory, pollution prevention and disassembly were also excluded from the review. Research with a highly ecological rather than supply chain perspective (green purchasing, industrial ecology and industrial ecosystem) was also included. Sinuata used the published literature from 1990 onwards to go back to other papers by cross-referencing. As the published literature is interlinked to a considerable degree, one paper (stem) leads to others (branches). So, one thread leads to others. As reference accumulated, it was found that some of them were more central and useful than others. Sinuata considered such references as seminal papers. There were also found to be generally referenced a number of times in subsequent literature. Thus, within the defined objective, this work integrates and takes forward the literature on GSCM since its conceptualisation. About 1500 books, articles from journals and edited volumes were covered and generated a list of 227 cited references which are given at the end of the article.

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Literature sources available

Books

Books and monographs are written for specific audiences. Some are aimed at the academic market, with a theoretical slant. Others, aimed at practising professionals, may be more applied in their content. The material in books is usually presented in a more ordered and accessible manner than in journals, pulling together a wider range of topics. They are, therefore, particularly useful as introductory sources to help clarify your research questions) and objectives or the research methods you intend to use. Some academic text books, such as this one, are now supported by web pages providing additional information. However, books may contain out-of-date material even by the time they are published.

News papers

Newspapers are a good source of topical events, developments within business and government, as well as recent statistical information such as share prices. They also sometimes review recent research reports (Box 3.6). The main 'quality' newspapers have websites

Box 3.6
Focus on research in the news

Biofuel targets in EU will outweigh benefits*

A plan to increase the use of biofuels in Europe may do nothing to help fight climate change and incur costs that outweigh the benefits, says an internal European Union report. The unpublished study by the Joint Research Centre, the European Commission's in-house scientific institute, may complicate the Commission's plans to set a new biofuels target for 2020. They account for 10 per cent of transport fuels in the 27-member EU.

The costs will almost certainly outweigh the benefit, says the report, a copy of which has been obtained by the *Financial Times*. The decrease in welfare caused by imposing a biofuels target is between €3.1bn (\$4.2bn; £2.5bn) and €65 bn, the study says. The uncertainty is too great to say whether the EU 10 per cent biofuel target will save greenhouse gas or not, it adds.

EU leaders called for the target last year as part of a move to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent of 1990 levels by 2020.

However, some commissioners have expressed concern about the knock-on effects of using plants for fuel. Indonesia has seen mass street protests this week over record soyabean prices, triggered by US farmers opting to grow corn to supply the biofuel industry. Green

groups are also concerned that forests could be cleared for food crops that have been displaced by biofuel plantations. Corn and palm oil are among the most popular biofuel sources, though only sugar from Brazil is considered sufficiently 'green' by the Joint Research Centre as it grows quickly and produces a lot of energy.

A Commission spokesman said the centre's report had not been peer reviewed. She said: 'It is a contribution to the debate. We are looking at the whole picture and we will have sustainability criteria'.

In the draft directive, only those biofuel sources grown on land that was not forest or peat bog can be counted. There would also be a minimum level of greenhouse-gas saving, as some require more carbon to make than fossil fuels burn. Countries would have to monitor imports to check their origin. However, since the World Trade Organisation governs trade in biofuels, it is not possible to block them on environmental grounds.

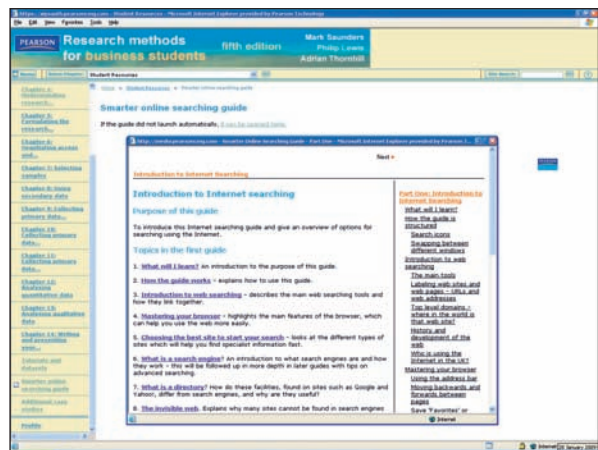
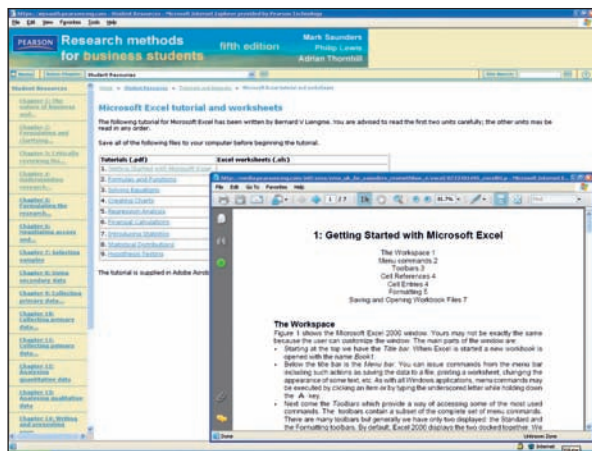
The Joint Research Centre suggests that it would be more efficient to use biomass to generate power and that the separate transport target be scrapped. It is even doubtful of the merits of using waste products, such as straw, since transporting large quantities to biofuel factories itself requires fuel.

Adrian Bebb, of Friends of the Earth, said: 'The report has a damning verdict on the EU policy: it should be abandoned in favour of real solutions to climate change'.

Source: article by Bebb, Andrew (2008) *Financial Times*, 18 Jan. Copyright 2008 The Financial Times Limited.

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Explore recent articles and up-to-date issues in research practice through the **Focus on management research** and **Research in the news** features.



Save time and improve your research results by using the **Tutorials on Excel, NVivo and SPSS**, and the **Smarter Online Searching Guide**. Both of these valuable resources are accessible at www.pearsoned.co.uk/saunders.

Guided tour (continued)

Chapter 3 Critically reviewing the literature

- to discover explicit recommendations for further research. These can provide you with a superb justification for your own research question(s) and objectives;
- to help you to avoid simply repeating work that has been done already;
- to sample current opinions in newspapers, professional and trade journals, thereby gaining insights into the aspects of your research question(s) and objectives that are considered newsworthy;
- to discover and provide an insight into research approaches, strategies (Section 4.3) and techniques that may be appropriate to your own research question(s) and objectives.

Adopting critical perspective in your reading

Harvard College Library (2006) provides for its students a useful check list of skills to be practised for effective reading. These skills include:

Previewing, which is looking around the text before you start reading in order to establish precisely its purpose and how it may inform your literature search;

Annotating, that is conducting a dialogue with yourself, the author, and the issues and ideas at stake.

Here the Harvard advice, we think, is very useful. It urges readers to be 'thinking-intensive' (see Box 3.1).

Summarising. The best way to determine that you've really got the point is to be able to state it in your own words. Outlining the argument of a text is a revision of annotating, and can be done quite informally in the margins of the text.

Box 3.1 Checklist

Annotating your critical reading. Advice on how to read in a 'thinking-intensive' way

- First of all, throw away the highlighter in favour of a pen or pencil. Highlighting can actually distract from the business of learning and dilute your comprehension. It only seems like an active reading strategy; in actual fact, it can fall you into a dangerous passivity.
- Mark up the margins of your text with words: ideas that occur to you, notes about things that seem important to you, reminders of how issues in a text may connect with your research questions and objectives. This kind of interaction keeps you conscious of the reason you are reading. Throughout your research these annotations will be useful memory triggers.
- Develop your own symbol system: asterisk a key idea, for example, or use an exclamation point for the surprising, absurd, bizarre... Like your margin words, your hieroglyphs can help you reconstruct the important observations that you made at an earlier time. And they will be indispensable when you return to a text later in the term, in search of a particular passage that you may want to include in your project report.
- Get in the habit of hearing yourself ask questions – 'What does this mean?', 'Why is he or she drawing that conclusion?' Write the questions down (in your margins, at the beginning or end of the reading, in a notebook, or elsewhere). They are reminders of the unfinished business you still have with a text: to come to terms with on your own, once you've had a chance to digest the material further, or have done further reading.

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Chapter 3 Critically reviewing the literature

Review and discussion questions

- Go to the website of the general search engine Google (<http://www.google.com>). Use the different Google services such as 'Google Search', 'Google Scholar' and 'University Search' to search for articles on a topic which you are currently studying as part of your course.
 - Make notes regarding the types of items that each of these services finds.
 - How do these services differ?
 - Which service do you think is likely to prove most useful to your research project?
- Agree with a friend to each review the same article from a refereed academic journal, which contains a clear literature review section. Evaluate independently the literature review in your chosen article with regard to its content, critical nature and structure using the checklists in Boxes 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 respectively. Do not forget to make notes regarding your answers to each of the points raised in the checklists. Discuss your answers with your friend.
- Visit an online database or your university library and obtain a copy of an article that you think will be of use to an assignment you are both currently working on. Use the checklist in Box 3.16 to assess the relevance and value of the article to your assignment.

Progressing your research project

Critically reviewing the literature

- Consider your research questions and objectives.
- Use your lecture notes, course textbooks and relevant review articles to define both narrow and broader parameters of your literature search, considering language, subject area, business sector, geographical area, publication period and literature type.
- Generate key words and search terms using one or a variety of techniques such as reading, brainstorming and relevance trees. Discuss your ideas widely, including with your project tutor and colleagues.
- Start your search using both database and printed tertiary sources to identify relevant secondary literature. Begin with those tertiary sources that abstract and index academic journal articles and books. At the same time, obtain relevant literature that has been referenced in articles you have already read. Do not forget to record your searches systematically and in detail.
- Expand your search via other sources such as the internet and by browsing and scanning.
- Obtain copies of items, evaluate them systematically and make notes. Remember also to record bibliographic details, a brief description of the content and supplementary information on an index card or in your reference database.
- Start drafting your critical review as early as possible, keeping in mind its purpose and taking care to reference properly and avoid plagiarism.
- Continue to search the literature throughout your research project to ensure that your review remains up to date.

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Multiple choice questions

To the multiple choice questions below to test your knowledge of this chapter. Once you have completed the test, click on 'Submit Answers for Grading' to get your results.

1. Leadership, controlling and allocating resources describes which ONE of these?

Strategy
 Research
 Marketing
 Management

2. Management research is simply systematic research to find out things about business and management? (Stauder et al 2008). Which of these does it concern?

Human resources
 Production planning
 Marketing planning
 All of the above
 None of these

3. Ratio analysis is mostly associated with:

estate management
 managerial management
 financial aspects of management

A Summary, Self-check questions and Review and discussion questions, and recommended Further reading at the end of each chapter enable you to reflect upon key points and pursue topics in more depth.

You will be given lots of opportunities to review your progress! Every chapter includes handy **Checklists**, tips on **Progressing your research project**, as well as **Self-check questions** (at the end of the chapter). There are additional interactive **Multiple choice questions** on the Companion Website.

Self-check questions

Help with these questions is available at the end of the chapter.

3.1 The following extract and associated references are taken from the first draft of a critical literature review. The research project was concerned with the impact of direct insurers on the traditional motor insurer.

List the problems with this extract in terms of its:

- content;
- structure.

Jackson (1995) suggests that businesses must be developed from a customer rather than a product perspective. Lindcliffe (1994) demonstrates that direct selling gives the consumer increased control as it is up to them when and if they wish to respond to adverts or direct mail. MacKenzie (1995) comments that free gifts are useful for getting responses to adverts, which is ultimately what all direct insurers need. Bowen (1995) suggests that this type of company can be split into three equally important parts: marketing, insurance and information technology. Motor insurance is particularly price sensitive because of its compulsory nature and its perception by many to have no real 'value' to themselves.

Bowers, I. (1994) 'Short cut to success', *Post Magazine* 2, 26 July.

Jackson, D.R. (1995) 'Prudent's prudent parochialism', *Direct Marketing*, 26-29 April.

Lindcliffe, I. (1995) 'Death of a salesman', *Post Magazine* 15, 30-31 June.

MacKenzie, G. (1995) 'Rise of the freebie', *Post Magazine* 2, 5-6 February.

3.2 Outline the advice you would give a colleague on:

- How to plan her search;
- Which literature to search first.

3.3 Brainstorm at least one of the following research questions, either on your own or with a colleague, and list the key words that you have generated.

- How effective is profit-related pay as a motivator?
- How do the opportunities available to a first-time house buyer through interpersonal discussion influence the process of selecting a financial institution for the purpose of applying for a house purchase loan?
- To what extent do new methods of direct selling of financial services pose a threat to existing providers?

3.4 You are having considerable problems with finding relevant material for your research when searching online databases. Suggest possible reasons why this might be so.

3.5 Reverse the following passage as part of a critical literature review using the Harvard system of referencing.

From what I've read, the English Language Teaching market, which this company serves, remains attractive for publishers despite a decline in growth as this quote shows: 'Overall, the ELT materials market has continued to show growth, because, globally, the demand for English learning persists, albeit on a lower growth track than in the 1980s.'¹ The latest published statistics that I've been able to find (1999) tell us that there are 1,200 million ELT learners worldwide.² I therefore think that the need for good ELT authors is growing and, as Francis says: 'The name of the author remains a critical success factor, and an important sub-brand in many cases.'³

¹E. Francis, 'Unrungs drive ELT growth', *Bookline*, 23 May 2001, p. 26.

²Caeson, C. (ed.), *Book Publishing in Britain* (London: Bookline Publications, 1999).

³E. Francis, *ELT Publishing*, p. 19. A.C. Caeson (ed.), *Book Publishing in Britain* (London: Bookline Publications, 1999) pp. 86-104.

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Preface

In writing the fifth edition of *Research Methods for Business Students* we have responded to the many comments we have received regarding previous editions. In particular, this has led us to substantially revise Chapter 4 'Understanding research philosophies and approaches', Chapter 5 'Formulating the research design' and discuss consultancy projects where appropriate (e.g. in Chapter 14 'Writing and presenting your project report'). We have also revised Chapter 13 'Analysing qualitative data' to reflect the variety of types of processes to analyse these data. In our revisions throughout the book and our sourcing of all new cases we have taken into account the growing importance of the Internet as a means of accessing academic literature and research data sets. This has necessitated substantial updating for Chapter 3, 'Critically reviewing the literature', and Chapter 8, 'Using secondary data'. We have also taken the opportunity to check and revise the tables of Internet addresses fully and to further develop our discussions regarding issues associated with the use of email, Internet chat rooms in interviewing (Chapter 10) and Internet and intranet-mediated questionnaires (Chapter 11).

The reality of relatively inexpensive and easily accessible computer processing power for almost all students has had significant implications for business and management students' research. As in previous editions, we have taken a predominantly non-software-specific approach in our writing. By doing this, we have been able to focus on the general principles needed to utilise a range of analysis software and the Internet effectively for research. However, recognising that many students have access to sophisticated data-analysis software and may need help in developing these skills, we continue to provide access to 'teach yourself' guides to SPSS™, Excel™, NVivo™ and Internet searching via the book's website (www.pearsoned.co.uk/saunders). Where appropriate, these guides are provided with data sets. In the preparation of the fifth edition we were fortunate to receive considerable feedback from colleagues in universities throughout the world. We are extremely grateful to all the reviewers who gave their time and shared their ideas.

Inevitably, the body of knowledge of research methods has developed further since 2006, and we have revised the chapters accordingly. Our experiences of teaching and supervising students and working through the methods in classes have suggested alternative approaches and the need to provide additional material. Consequently, we have taken the opportunity to update and refine existing worked examples and develop new ones where appropriate. The new case studies at the end of each chapter have been developed with colleagues, providing up-to-date scenarios through which to illustrate issues associated with undertaking research. However, the basic structure remains much the same as the previous four editions.

Other minor changes and updating have been made throughout. Needless to say, any errors of omission and commission are our responsibility.

As with previous editions, much of our updating has been guided by comments from students and colleagues, to whom we are most grateful. We should like to thank students from Oxford Brookes University and on the Research Methods' Summer Schools for their



comments on all of the chapters. Colleagues in both our own and other universities have continued to provide helpful comments and advice. We are particularly grateful to Levent Altinay (Oxford Brookes University), Murray Clark (Sheffield Hallam University), Joanne Duberley (Birmingham University), David Hart (Northumbria University), Tracey Panther (Oxford Brookes University) and Christine Williams (University of Gloucestershire). Colleagues and friends again deserve thanks for their assistance in providing examples of research across the spectrum of business and management, co-authoring chapters, writing case studies and in reviewing parts of this book, in particular, Mohammad Al-Kilani (Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Jordan), Peter Bolan (University of Ulster), David Coghlan (Trinity College, Dublin), Mridula Dwivedi (Institute for International Management and Technology, Gurgaon, India), Karen Handley (Oxford Brookes University), Peter Harris (Oxford Brookes University), Bill Lee (University of Sheffield), Liz Lee-Kelley (Cranfield University), Stephanie Macht (Northumbria University), Michael Savvas (Aberystwyth University), Richard Slack (Northumbria University), Mike Wallace (Cardiff University and Advanced Institute of Management Research), Catherine Wang (Royal Holloway, University of London), Alison Wray (Cardiff University), Anil Yadav (Institute for International Management and Technology, Gurgaon, India) and Deli Yang (Bradford University).

The contributions of Lynette Bailey, Darren Bolton and Martin Jenkins to Chapters 3 and 8 and of Andrew Guppy to Chapter 12 in earlier editions of this book are gratefully acknowledged.

We would also like to thank all of the staff at Pearson Education (both past and present) who supported us through the process of writing the fifth edition. Our thanks go, in particular, to Matthew Walker, our commissioning editor, for his support and enthusiasm throughout the process and to Stuart Hay for his insightful comments. We would also like to express our thanks to Elizabeth Rix as desk editor.

Once again, our thanks are due to Jane, Jenny, Jan, Jemma, Ben, Andrew and Katie, who still allow us the time to absent ourselves to think and write.

MNKS
PL
AT
July 2008

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Tables

Table 1.1 from *Realigning the stakeholders in management research: lessons form industrial, work and organizational psychology in British Journal of Management Vol. 12 Special issue*, pp. 41–8, Blackwell Publishing, (Hodgkinson, G.P., Herriot, P. and Anderson, N., 2001; Table 3.1 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2008; Table 7.2 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2008; Table 9.3 from *Real WorldResearch: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner – Researchers*, 2e Blackwell Publishing, (Robson 2002); Table 11.4 from *Translation techniques for questionnaires in International and Cross-Cultural Management Research*, Sage Publications, (Usunier, 1998); Table 12.2 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2008; Table 12.4 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2008; Table 12.5 Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2008; Table 14.1 from *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper 5e*, Phoenix. AZ: Oryx Press, Greenwood Publishing Group Inc., Westport CT, (Day, R., 1998:160).

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Box 3.5 from Structure of the literature review, Taylor & Francis Ltd (Williams, C.S, and Saunders M.N.K, 2006); Box 3.15 from Microsoft reveals answer to Google Scholar Candace Lombardi, ZDNet News, 12th April 2006, The YGS Group; Box 14.2 from How to . . . write an abstract from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com>; Box 14.3 from The changing travel behaviour of Austria's ageing population and its impact on tourism in Tourism Review. 62 (3/4): 15–20, Emerald Group Publishing, (Moller, C, Weiermair, K and Wintersberger, E 2008); Box 14.5 from Real World Research 2e, Blackwell Publishing, (Robson, 2002).

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