Top Tips for Managing Information

Managing all your notes, information searches, reading, documents and references may seem like a daunting task but there are lots of tools and simple guidelines that can help you stay organised. Look at our top tips below to get started:

Investigate information management tools

Explore the range of tools available and decide which would be best for the storage and creation of your notes and documents. Here is a small selection for you to consider:

- Office 365: all students and staff have access to Microsoft OneDrive, which offers secure online cloud storage. There is also a facility for working in project teams and groups, with multiple options for file storage and sharing.
- Google docs: a free tool, which allows you to write, edit and collaborate on documents wherever you are.
- Evernote or Notion: free tools (with subscription options), that allow you to capture, share and organise your notes from wherever you are.
- Dropbox: a cloud storage and synchronization tool. This is a subscription based tool.

Consider how you will access your notes and documents

Will you be mainly working in one location or require access to your documents from different places, such as home, the Library or out in the field? If you'll need to access your notes in multiple locations, you'll need to think about the devices you'll be using, where you'll save your notes and documents and how you'll view them. Consider if you'll have internet access or if you'll need an offline copy.

Create useful document and file names

A good file name will help you quickly locate a document so that you can easily share or find important notes or research. Taking a systematic approach can also help you keep track of changes and edited versions of your work. Make sure your file name is **brief** but descriptive enough to be **meaningful** and include a date or version number where relevant.

Regularly back up your files

It is always good practice to save a copy of your files just in case something goes wrong. Set up a reminder to back up your data regularly. USB flash drives and external hard drives can be useful for short term offline storage while OneDrive provides a secure cloud storage option. If your data is sensitive or personal, you may need to consider encryption and secure storage for your back up files.

Set up search alerts on key databases

Keep up to date with the latest publications and current research in your subject area by setting up search alerts on key databases. Search alert tools allow you to receive notifications via email whenever new publications are added to the database that match your search criteria. You may need to create a free account with the database provider to set up alerts and save searches. You can save your query and create an alert in Library Search too.

Decide how you are going to manage your references

How you manage your references may depend on the type of project you are doing. For some assignments, keeping track of your reading using a Word document or reference building tool like MyBib may be sufficient, while for others you may need to use reference management software. Investigate the different reference management tools available to see what would work best for you.