GATHERING AND EVALUATING INFORMATION

Chapter in Review

**LO1** What are the differences between primary and secondary research?

Primary research is the process of conducting your own study to acquire the information you need, while secondary research is the process of locating information that has been discovered by other people.

**LO2** Where can you locate information for your speech?

Information for your speech can come from primary research or secondary research. Sources for secondary research include encyclopedias, books, articles in academic journals and magazines, newspapers, statistical sources, biographies, quotation books and websites, and government documents. Primary sources include fieldwork observations, surveys, interviews, original artifacts or document examinations, and experiments.

**LO3** How will you evaluate information and sources?

Because your search of secondary sources is likely to uncover far more information than you can use, you will want to skim sources to determine whether or not to read them in full. Skimming is a method of rapidly going through a work to determine what is covered and how. Also, there are four criteria to use when evaluating sources: authority, objectivity, currency, and relevance.

**LO4** How will you select and record relevant information for your speech?

As you find the facts, opinions, and elaborations that you want to use in your speech, you need to record the information accurately and keep a careful account of your sources so that they can be cited appropriately during your speech. Although some people try to record information in files on their computers, we propose here a proven method for organizing your information on research cards.

**LO5** How and why do you cite sources in a speech?

In your speeches, as in any communication in which you use ideas that are not your own, you need to acknowledge the sources of your ideas and statements. Specifically mentioning your sources not only helps the audience evaluate the content but also adds to your credibility. In addition, citing sources will give concrete evidence of the depth of your research. Failure to cite sources, especially when you are presenting information that is meant to substantiate a controversial point, is unethical. So just as you would provide footnotes in a written document, you must provide oral footnotes during your speech.

Chapter Quiz

**True/False**

1. A biography about a historical figure is not an appropriate source of secondary information.
2. According to the text, the heart of an effective interview is a list of good questions.
3. Primary research involves looking for information that others have discovered.
4. Because statistics are a great way to present information, a speaker should use as many as possible.
5. In addition to research that others have done, your personal experience can be a good source of information for a speech.

**Multiple Choice**

6. All of the following are examples of primary sources EXCEPT:
   a. surveys
   b. fieldwork
   c. interviews
   d. a website of famous quotations
   e. experiments

7. The list of questions you plan to ask during an interview is known as:
   a. interview assessment
   b. interview cards
   c. interview inquiries
   d. interview basics
   e. interview protocol
Establishing Credentials
In his speech on bioluminescence—the light emitted by some living organisms, such as fireflies—Dan established his credentials by drawing on his personal knowledge as a biogenetics major and the fieldwork he had done on fireflies during an eight-week summer internship.

Finding Information on Internet Bulletin Boards
For his speech on bioluminescence, Dan consulted a bulletin board maintained by the Association of Biogenetic Engineers. He was able to quote several issues being debated by experts in the field even before their works had been published. This complemented the information he had located in books, which had not been so up-to-date.

Finding Useful Information in a Book
Although Dan’s speech topic, bioluminescence, was new to most of his audience, it was well studied by biogeneticists. So while an Internet search looking for “bioluminescence books” turned up several potential sources, Dan needed to use his university’s online library database to locate copies of the books and then pick them up in person in order to skim them for useful information.

Finding Articles from an Online Database
Lauren typed the subject “prescription drug abuse” into the “subject” prompt on the home page of the EBSCO database. The search revealed 108 references from a variety of highly respected periodicals, including the National Review, the Journal of the American Medical Association, and American Medical News.

Accessing Newspaper Articles
Carl wanted to give a speech on Everglades restoration efforts, so to understand how Floridians viewed this project, Carl accessed the website of the Miami Herald, where he found 119 recent articles and more than 3,500 archived articles.

Collecting Observational Information for a Speech
Lauren wanted to know what addicts go through as they undergo treatment, so she arranged to spend a day at a local treatment center, observing to learn firsthand about some of these processes and experiences.

Determining Audience Attitudes with a Survey
For her speech on prescription drug abuse, Lauren wanted to know where people in her community and students attending her school stood on the issue. So she conducted a telephone survey of the community, an Internet survey of students on campus, and a paper-and-pencil survey of her classmates, asking them whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “Prescription drug abuse is a real problem in our country today.” She was then able to tailor her speech to address her classmates’ attitudes toward the topic and use the other survey data to inform them about where the campus and community stood regarding the topic.

Scheduling an Interview
For his speech on the vanishing honeybees, Justin looked at the Biology Department website and discovered a faculty member who has actually published two papers on the vanishing honeybees. He read the papers and learned that the phenomenon is referred to as CCD, or Colony Collapse Disorder. He decided to try to set up an interview with the professor to learn more. He telephoned and left this message, which he followed up with an e-mail message:

Hello, my name is Justin Martin. I am preparing a classroom speech on CCD and know that you are an expert on this subject. If possible, I’d like to make an appointment to talk with you. Would you be available to talk with me for fifteen or twenty minutes during the next few days?

Conducting Experiments for Primary Research
Justin had heard that the radio waves of cellular telephones are one reason honeybees become disoriented, cannot make it home to their hives, and then die. He followed the suggestion he read about placing a cell phone in a flower garden to observe what happens. Of course, he only did this long enough to see the bees’ reaction, not long enough to cause a lasting result.

Using Narratives to Elaborate
Holly used this narrative to elaborate on her point about the benefits of day care:

"I will never forget having lunch my first day on the job at the day-care center.... I watched in awe as three-year-old children poured their own milk and passed the pitcher along to the next child at the table, and, likewise, dished up their own macaroni and cheese; green
beans, and so on. The children visited cordially with me as we ate. When everyone was finished eating, each child at the table helped to clear the dishes away. To my amazement, these three-year-olds were behaving in a more civil manner than my roommates do! I cannot help but wonder whether my friends and I could have benefited from learning the social skills these children had mastered as a result of their experiences at a day-care center.”

Stating the Credentials of the Person You Interviewed

Justin’s adviser is a nationally known expert on colony collapse disorder and the vanishing honeybee crisis, so he chose to interview her for his speech. Justin revealed her credentials in his speech by saying, “I have the privilege of having as my adviser one of the nation’s leading colony collapse disorder scholars. In an interview with Dr. Susan Stromme, I learned that the radiation emitted from cell phones is one major cause of death for the bees.”

Preparing Primary Questions

For his interview with a music producer, Noah prepared his primary questions around the topics of finding artists, the decision process, criteria for signing an artist, and stories of success and failure.