MANAGING THE LITERATURE

Setting up a system to manage lots of information, without losing track of it

Key steps:

- Keep and file paper and electronic copies of the literature you have read, with each item clearly labeled
- Keep a paper list of what you have read, so that you can find it easily; for example in a folder, in a note book, or on index cards
- Keep an electronic list of what you have read, so that you can find it easily; for example using the Access database, or in a Word document

Use a coding system. You could group the literature you have read by:

- Author
- Date of publication
- Type of material (books, articles and websites)
- Relevance to your subject area - high, medium or low
- Ideas, arguments or themes

Here is an example:

As you read the literature (books, articles and websites):

- Add each item to a paper or electronic list (as above), with key words describing what is in each one
- Write a full reference for each item
- Label everything you have printed or photocopied as A1, A2, A3 etc, and put this code into your paper or electronic list
- File everything in numerical or alphabetical order
- Note in your paper or electronic list, where books came from; for example the library, your own bookshelves or borrowed from a friend or your tutor
- Save web pages as files when you use them, label them as B1, B2 etc, and put these codes into your paper or electronic list
- Cross reference items which relate to eah other; for example, they cover different sides of an argument, or they cover the same theme

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