

Data Reference Worksheet

This worksheet was adapted from - Data Reference Worksheet, Gould Library, Carleton College, rev. 2016.

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View: <https://goo.gl/1z6LBH>

Fill out as much as you can, both with places to search and what you find there.

1. Your Research or Question

Topic:

Characteristics of Data Needed

Unit of Analysis (e.g. individuals, households, companies, players, teams, counties, states, nations):

Geography (e.g. parcels in a city, counties in a region, democratized countries):

Time Period (e.g. 1980-2006):

Frequency (e.g. annual, quarterly):

2. Brainstorm Likely Sources of Data

*Who is likely to collect data on this topic? List as many as you can think of.
Visit their web sites. List sources to follow up on.*

Researchers:	Government Agencies:	NGOs, IGOs:	Think Tanks and Research Organizations:

3. Use Specialized Data Search Tools

Data are often collected in repositories or reported in compendia and reports, which can be used as starting points on the trail to the data you need.

To find databases through the library, search by title in the [Database A-Z list](#).

Compendia, portals, and indexes

When data are likely to be compiled or reported, these tools allow you to search by topic and discover data and data producers.

Likely candidates:

[Statistical Abstract of the United States](#)

[ProQuest Statistical Insight](#)

[ProQuest Datasets](#)

[Data Planet Datasets](#)

[Social Explorer](#)

[Data.gov](#)

[data.census.gov](#)

Polling Resources

Find questionnaires, polls, and public opinion survey data from Roper, Gallup, GSS and the Census.

[Public Opinion Resources](#)

Data Collections, Archives, & Repositories

When data are likely to be shared by the researchers who produced them, they are likely to deposit the data in repositories.

Likely candidates:

[Re3data.org](#)

[datacite.org](#)

[data.worldbank.org](#)

Social Sciences data repositories, like

[Harvard Dataverse](#)

[ICPSR](#)

4. Evaluating Potential Data

a. Find Overview Information

Who is the creator of the data? Why was it collected? What is its scope? What geography and time period are covered?

b. Find the Technical Documentation

Look for and download or document technical documentation about the dataset, including information on how it was created (e.g., survey, administrative reporting, direct measure), variable definitions, indications of what was included or excluded. Survey instruments are also helpful. Hint: look for a codebook, user guide, or documentation section of the site.

c. Identify the Download Options and Access Restrictions

Who gets to use the data? Contact a librarian if you are unsure if you can access it. What formats of download are available - CSV, text, Excel?

5. Analyzing Data

Analyzing data requires knowing about various research methods, software like Excel and visualization tools.

[Burton, D. \(2000\). Secondary data analysis. In Burton, D. Research training for social scientists \(pp. 347-360\). London: SAGE Publications](#)

[ChristofWolf, DominiqueJoye, TomWSmith, & Yang-chihFu. \(2016\). The SAGE Handbook of Survey Methodology. In The SAGE Handbook of Survey Methodology.](#)

[Donsbach, W., & Traugott, M. W. \(2008\). The SAGE handbook of public opinion research. London, : SAGE Publications.](#)

[Geher, G., & Hall, S. \(2014\). Straightforward statistics : Understanding the tools of research.](#)

Reference Sources for SPSS

ICPSR's A Student's Guide to Interpreting SPSS Output for Basic Analyses:
<https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/files/instructors/InterpretingSPSSOutput2016.pdf>

Forums, such as [StackExchange](#)

[Abbott, M. L. \(2011\). Understanding educational statistics using microsoft excel and spss](#)

The library database, [Safari books](#), contains e-books and videos on using SPSS and interpreting data. Login using your USC email and search for SPSS.

[Computer Centers on Campus with SPSS](#)

	King Hall KOH 206	Ahmanson Information Commons at Leavey Library	Waite Phillips Hall WPH B34
Contact	213-740-7708	213-740-9223	213-740-7950
Spring 2019 Hours (8/26/19 – 12/10/19)	Monday – Friday 24 hours Saturday Closes at 11:59 p.m. Sunday Opens at 9:00 a.m.	Monday – Friday 24 hours Saturday Closes at 11:59 p.m. Sunday Opens at 9:00 a.m.	Monday – Sunday 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.

Tutorials

Tutorials on using and analyzing with Excel, SPSS and visualization tools are available through USC's subscription to Lynda.com (As of Oct 1, 2019, LinkedIn Learning).

- 1) Login here: <https://itservices.usc.edu/lynda/>.
 - 2) Click on "Get Started" and enter your USC email. If you do not see the USC logo on the upper right hand-side click on "Sign In" on the top right and enter your USC email and you will prompted to enter your USC password.
 - 3) Then search for Excel and SPSS for relevant tutorials on how to get started and analyzing and visualizing your data.
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6. Take Cues From Secondary Literature

Track what you find in the literature to discover data sources, understand the data landscape, and place your research into context with related research.

Author/Date	Claim	Data	Dependent Variable/ Estimation Technique	Significant Findings	Other
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

7. Document What You Find

For extended projects, you will want to keep a research journal. Do a favor for your future self and keep good records of what you find so you can retrace your steps.

What to record about a data download in a research journal

- ☒ URL or DOI
- ☒ Date
- ☒ Author, principal investigator, producing agency, etc.
- ☒ Exact name of dataset (not just the web site's name) and the version if appropriate
- ☒ What you had to query in order to get the exact download you got
- ☒ Where you are storing local copies data and all relevant documentation
- ☒ Suggested citation information if provided