Recommended Research Methods Books in Environment, Behaviour & Society

The following research methods books are recommended to newly admitted research students. They will provide a fundamental understanding of the nature of inquiry through research, the philosophy of scientific research and interpretive scholarship and a range of “modes of inquiry” employed in EBS research.

Modes of Inquiry

The range of modes of inquiry used in EBS research includes the following:

- The field-based empirical, social-scientific, post-positivistic epistemology is the primary approach to research in environment-behaviour studies, urban sociology and geography, urban planning and other environmental social science research fields. This approach includes experimental, quasi-experimental, survey, naturalistic, ethnographic and case study research. The approach includes quantitative and qualitative approaches, but always empirical. This is the predominant mode of inquiry in EBS.

- The text-based, interpretive epistemology used heavily in architecture, the allied arts and other humanities disciplines, including archival, historical, theoretical, interpretative and other text-based interpretive scholarship. This is often used to complement field-based empirical research.

- As well as interdisciplinary combinations, triangulations and mixed modes. Increasingly, mixed modes of inquiry that combine quantitative and qualitative or other combinations of methods are favoured in the field.

An important part of methods is quality assurance – how to judge the quality of research, both qualitative and quantitative, including how to judge the trustworthiness of data, logic and analysis, in reading research and scholarship, in formulating proposals, and in conducting and reporting research.

There are a number of related issues with which all new researchers need to become familiar, including but not limited to: literature searches and electronic bibliographic databases; qualitative and quantitative data analysis; research software packages including quantitative and qualitative data analysis packages; ethics including human ethics, plagiarisum and intellectual property rights; how to write research grant proposals, publishable papers, reports, theses, CVs and business plans including presentation skills; and planning your research and professional development post-PhD.

Most Highly Recommended Books for Purchase

A wide variety of books is available on research methods. The first group below are most highly recommended for purchase and for reading cover-to-cover to give you a solid beginning basis for your understanding of how to conduct EBS research. The Groat and Wang focuses on different modes of inquiry in architecture, design, urban planning and other environmental disciplines including EBS; Leedey and Ormrod is a practical how-to research book that also has useful chapters on historical, interpretive and qualitative research; while the Zeisel is an excellent book as an introduction to observational, interview and survey research in our field, with examples from the journal research literature.


**Recommended Research Methods Books**

A number of specialised books are available through the new Sciences and Technology Library (which incorporates the former Denis Winston Architecture Library) and the University’s main Fisher Library. Those with an asterisk are the most recommended.

You should also regularly keep up-to-date with the major journals in the field, and peruse them regularly to see what research is being reported, and how research methods are evolving.


Literacy

As a research student, you are expected to know how to use the SciTech and Fisher Libraries, inter-library document delivery system, electronic catalogues and databases, etc. The SciTech Library provides bibliographic instruction at the beginning of each semester; please contact Mr Michael Arndell or any of the librarians who will be able to assist you.

You are also expected to write succinctly in clear, grammatical prose with no jargon, and to reference according to a standard format. The University's Learning Centre at [http://www.usyd.edu.au/lc/courses.html](http://www.usyd.edu.au/lc/courses.html) has a variety of short-courses (2 to 9 hours) that former students – both international and domestic – have found very helpful for improving their writing. Some supervisors require students to take them; all are highly recommended.

There are also many excellent reference books on writing available in libraries and bookstores. The ones listed below are helpful for writing research proposals, dissertations and theses, and papers:


