Computer Science Final Year Project

Searching the Literature

Based on notes from Computer Science Project – UH core team (James Malcolm, Steve Hunt, Colin Egan)
Minor Modifications to allow for IST cases, for example deadlines
Introduction

- You will need to learn new things and incorporate them into your project
- Some of the things you put into your written work may be your own ideas – but you need to check that somebody else hasn’t already had the same idea, because
  - there’s no point in re-inventing an idea (although it’s perfectly sensible to try to repeat someone else’s results)
  - you get credit for having found the other person’s work
  - claiming someone else’s work for yourself is cheating
• There are three types of information that you might want to write about:
  o ‘generally accepted’ information
  o information about work that can be attributed to specific people
  o information about your own work
• It is important to give credit to those whose ideas inspired you, and upon whose work your project is based
Sources of Information (i)

Paper Based:

- Books
- Journals
- Conference Proceedings
- Official Reports
- Magazines / Newspapers
- Commercial Publications (user manuals, technical manuals, business reports, etcetera)
- Course Materials
- Others … ?

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Sources of Information (ii)

- web journals
- e-books
- official government web sites
- official company web sites
- official institutional (e.g. university) web sites
- personal web sites
- books
- journals
- abstracts / indexes
- software manuals

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Look for reliable material

- process of peer review
- material that has been edited and/or approved by a known publisher, or other reputable organization
- material found in the LRC is *mostly* reliable

If you are in doubt about the reliability of information

- check the source thoroughly
- use your common sense
- ask your tutor
- do not use the information

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Make proper use of Library – Studynet

- Use Studynet as an initial source of information about what is available
- Find out what journals cover the topic area you are interested in and print or save on disk.
- Think of alternative ways of describing the subject are you are interested in, and use those as search terms
- Use the library for books.

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Make sensible use of the WEB

Using the web

- Information on a large variety of topics
- Use Internet with caution. Information is not necessary correct. Depends where you get it front.
- Huge number of sources of information, but most of them are not reliable as primary sources
- There is little or no organization, except within a web site
Searching the web

- use search engines (and meta-search engines)
- think *carefully* about your search criteria
- follow interesting and useful links from sites you know & trust
- Avoid using company sites. They present their products as the best.

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Compiling a bibliography and Citing References

Keep a record of each item you read, and what you find there

- author(s)
- title
- source
- date of publication
- page numbers

Insert citations, and construct your bibliography, *as you write your report.*
What is a citation?

• A citation is a pointer to one of the sources of information you have used in putting together an essay or a report.

• You should insert a citation into the text of your essay/report at each point where you make use of a piece of published (or unpublished) work:
  o whenever you quote from another piece of work
  o whenever you draw on ideas, opinions, results etcetera that you have read elsewhere (as opposed to those you generated for yourself)

• The citation should refer the reader to a source which is listed in the bibliography at the end of your essay/report.
Why do you need to cite your sources?

- To demonstrate that you have read an appropriate body of background literature
- To show that you know what you are talking about
- To avoid having to include information in your essay/report that is not central to the message you are trying to get across and/or is explained better elsewhere
- To give credit for ideas, opinions, and other original work to those who deserve it
- To avoid accusations of plagiarism
What I a bibliography?

- A bibliography is a list of the sources of information you have used in preparing a document
- Each citation within the text of the document should have a corresponding bibliography entry
- Some sources will be cited many times within the text of the document – each of these should have a single entry
- You may find that you have used some general-purpose texts for background information, but have had no cause to cite them in the text of your document: these sources should also have bibliography entries

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What Format should I use for citations?

There are many different standards for writing citations and bibliography entries: we require to use the *Harvard* system.

See the UH Learning & Information Services website for further information on *Researching and Writing Reports*, including constructing bibliographies and citing sources:

http://www.herts.ac.uk/lis/help/tutorials/reports_index.html

See also on the intranet on the directory “WritingReferences”