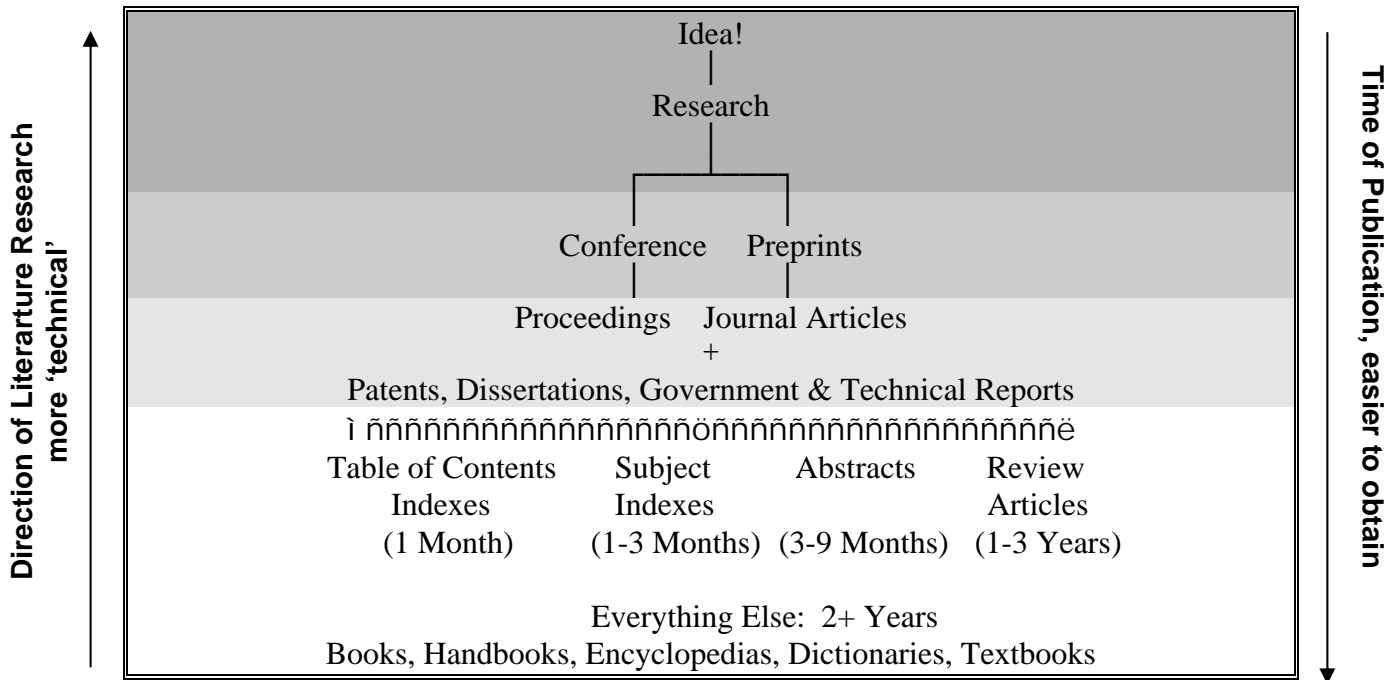




THE UNIVERSITY OF
TOLEDO
1872

Life Cycle of Scientific Information Library Resource Guide



- Private Research
- Informal Communication
(Invisible College)
- Formal Communication
(Primary Literature)
- Secondary Literature
(Tertiary Literature?)

Scientific information has a 'life cycle' of its own... it is born as an idea, and then matures and becomes more available to the public. First it appears within the so-called 'invisible college' of experts in the field, discussed at conferences and symposia or posted as pre-prints for comments and corrections. Then it appears in the published literature (the primary literature), often as a journal article in a peer-reviewed journal. Researchers can use the indexing and alerting services of the secondary literature to find out what has been published in a field. Depending on how much information is added by the indexer or abstractor, this may take a few months (though electronic publication has sped up this process). Finally, the information may appear in more popular or reference sources, sometimes called the tertiary literature.

The person beginning a literature search may take this process in reverse: using tertiary sources for general background, then going to the secondary literature to survey what has been published, following up by finding the original (primary) sources, and generating their own research Idea.