

3.6 Finding Information & Design

Industrial designers have to familiarise themselves with a new industry time and again. Furthermore, you often find that you need to use (standard) parts from an entirely different industry. Vacuum-cleaner hoses are sometimes used in toys, for example. For many designers, this regularly creates the need to find information in fields entirely different from the ones they are accustomed to. You can approach searches of this kind from various angles. Avoid spending too much time searching unsuccessfully in one particular way; if one avenue of searching does not yield the required information, switch to a different avenue in good time.

The most successful method of searching is a combination of a search for theoretical information and documentation supplemented by face-to-face talks with experts. So besides looking for the theory, you will need to find suitable persons or companies who can tell you more, either over the phone or during a visit.

Examples of Search Methods

The Library

This is a general source of information that needs no further explanation. But do not forget to look in other libraries of a specialised nature (construction, mechanical engineering) for extra information. Libraries have other search avenues apart from 'just' the books on the bookshelves.

Old Theses

Every graduate starts with a thorough analysis of his or her subject. The analysis is often far wider than the subject itself. The target group analyses, appendices and lists of references are often extremely useful sources of information, both as a direct source of knowledge and for pointers as to who to approach for a particular problem.

Reference Works

Lecture notes from your own subjects and lecture notes from optional subjects in the field of industrial design. Similarly, lecture notes from other faculties can sometimes be very enlightening. Also, check whether you can find lecture notes in one of the special subjects.

Experts

As a Delft student, you are in a privileged position, because throughout the campus and in the faculty building you can find many people who are highly expert in specific fields. These fields include ergonomics and areas like flow technology, bearing technology, pressure technology, tactility and so on. Experts can also be found outside the university - at your home, among your family, or at companies you can find on the Internet. Think of places where there are people who may know more about the problem facing you and get in touch with them. Prepare your conversation with them thoroughly; ensuring among

other things that you already know the requirements the part must satisfy (what kind of load, speed, conditions, size do you need?). The more accurately you know what you want, the faster you will find somebody who is prepared to help you, and also somebody who is capable of assisting you in solving the problem.

The Internet

The Internet is the medium students use most to search for information. In order to use the Internet to good effect, however, you do need to approach your search in the right way. There is loads of information on the Internet, but whether or not you find it depends on how you conduct your search. Here are some tips:

- 1 Keywords. Choose your keywords carefully; change them if they fail to lead to the information you want, add to them if you get too many hits, make them more general if they produce too few hits.
- 2 Search engines. No two are the same. Else typically gives more Dutch hits than Metacrawler or Google. Yahoo extracts hits differently from Lycos and so on. Switch search engines if you cannot find what you need.
- 3 Look for umbrella sites: do not search for one specific part (like an L section), but search according to industry associations: aluminium organisations, the Wood Association, playground equipment associations, etc. From these umbrella sites, links will

often lead you to a particular part you are looking for. Organisations like the Aluminium Association can probably tell you more about the standard parts that occur in the industry.

- 4 Do not forget to consult the Delft University sites! The Industrial Design website will often take you to valuable databases, sometimes via the blackboard. Ask the library how to reach "Standards Online" via the Internet, for example.
- 5 Combine your searches with telephone calls: on the Internet a designer seldom finds all the information that he/she needs. Numerous companies (engineering and otherwise) do not yet have their entire range of products on the Internet. So use the Internet to get an overall picture of the market in which you are looking for information and to identify useful people to contact.

Use of References

Be sure to state clearly in your document which references you have used. Look in other courses to see how this can best be done. Plagiarism is punishable!