

*Sage Research Methods by Sage Publications: A key tool for developing your research*

Jacqui Maung and Sam Thomas

Learning and Digital Support, Wrexham University

Getting started with a research project involves many decisions and often lots of choices about what research methods and strategies would be most appropriate. That is the problem that *Sage Research Methods* seeks to address by providing researchers at all levels with tools and information to help them make those decisions.

*Sage Research Methods* is a comprehensive database that includes thousands of books, articles, and videos that provide guidance and information covering the whole research process. *Sage* claims that this database contains the largest online collection of qualitative methods books, and since it was first developed in 2010 it has grown to be one of the most valued research resources in the academic community. Wrexham University Library has a subscription to the *Sage Research Methods* Core collection, which includes books and reference sources, podcasts, and videos. Alongside these, *Sage* has developed a collection of valuable research tools that can assist researchers in developing robust, evidence-based research methodologies.

This review will explore some of the main categories of content that we think are some of the most helpful tools for researchers, and we will highlight how we think it could be used for teaching research methods.

### **Accessing Sage Research Methods**

Staff and students at Wrexham University can access this database using the Resource Finder Library catalogue search tool. From the 'Useful Links' heading, choose 'Other Databases'. If you are not already signed in you will be prompted to do so at this stage. Once signed in, you can scroll down the list to choose *Sage Research Methods*.

When you access the database, you will be signed in as a member of Wrexham University, however you can also set up and sign in with your own profile so you can create reading lists, save your searches. and create alerts for new content about your

topics of interest, which we would recommend as it will help you to keep track of your work.

You can access over 1,200 books about research methods across many disciplines: you can search using keywords or browse by discipline. The collection includes a diversity of book types, starting with titles such as *Get your data from social media: Little quick fix* by Nicola Thomas (2020), which gives 10 second and 60 second summaries of each chapter. It also includes comprehensive works on a specific research topic, for example *The Sage handbook of data and society* (2025), edited by Thommaso Venturini et al., which considers the wider impact of data management and digital policies on research methodologies in great depth. A range of journal articles are collated in themed 'Main Works', which include works considering debates or theoretical approaches to specific methods. For example, *Sage Secondary Data Analysis* contains over 70 articles which focus on secondary data sources, collection methods, as well as exploring some of the ethical and practical implications. Complementing these resources are a selection of encyclopaedias and dictionaries, which can support users in choosing and defining relevant research theories and procedures. Whether you need a quick overview of a research theory, or an in-depth exploration of a quantitative approach, there is a resource here that can help.

One of the key features of Sage Research Methods is the inclusion of the Little Blue Books and Little Green Books series. The Little Blue Books contain concise explanations and examples covering qualitative research methods, whilst the Little Green Books cover quantitative research methods. They offer a great starting point for researchers wishing to find out more about a particular method which includes appraisal of, and practical guidance for each method. They could be particularly useful for those exploring the possibilities of using methods for the first time, for example when planning a dissertation or research project.

There are also a growing number of audio-visual resources in the podcast and video collections, which include discussions about topics with experts in the field. These are great for providing an additional entry point; they are fully captioned, include transcripts, and can be clipped into relevant sections for use.

## Research Tools

A feature that sets *Sage Research Methods* apart from other databases is the range of research tools on offer. They not only offer a quick entry point into the content outlined above, but they also provide researchers with a comprehensive set of tools than can help define parameters and track progress during their research projects.

The Methods Map is a powerful visualisation tool that can support researchers in understanding the scope and range of methodological concepts, as well as offering a structured way of finding relevant content. One example is the methods map for the term ‘sampling’, showing a definition of the concept, a link to see resources about the term, and how it relates to other similar terms. Clicking on any of the related terms will generate a new map, which includes a definition for that term and further related concepts. This visual approach is particularly useful for those new to research methods and can help to clarify terminology which may be unfamiliar.

Clicking on ‘Search all content’ in the term box will then enable the researcher to see resources that are directly relevant to that term. The results can be filtered by type of content, subject, and date so refining searches is straightforward.

One useful feature for those who have set up a personal account within *Sage Research Methods* is the option to create reading lists. Users can easily create and manage lists of content within the database, and either keep them private or make them public for others to view and use. This can be useful for managing resources for a specific module.

Researchers that want a guide through the whole research process may want to investigate the Project Planner tool. It guides the user through a series of questions that need to be answered at each stage of the research process, and in doing so, provides support and guidance from selected resources in the database. For example, in the section about developing a research question, the planner encourages the researcher to consider their methodological approach, developing hypotheses, and how to engage with theory - all useful pointers for a comprehensive approach. It clearly outlines and explains terms that can easily be confused – the difference between a research plan and research design, for example – and provides links to further resources on related topics for clarification. There are videos embedded in these sections where research

professionals provide guidance based on their experience, giving a practical insight into successful projects.

For those researchers conducting quantitative research, choosing the relevant test for statistical analysis can be tricky. The Which Stats Test tool enables researchers to answer a series of questions about their research to discover which tests would be most appropriate for their project. The first two questions ask about the purpose of your analysis when the researcher wants to identify differences in two sets of data. Working through the questions gives the user a clear understanding of the decision making that underpins the selection of quantitative research tests and provides supporting information to enable them to choose with confidence. On completing the questions, the tool will suggest a test and provide a link to further information.

### **Using Sage Research Methods for Teaching**

We have suggested some ways in which *Sage Research Methods* can be used in a research context and it would be a great tool to use with students to prepare them for their research projects. Here are some suggestions for how the tool could be used in the classroom and for flipped activities:

- The Research Map could be used as a starting point for a discussion about what is meant by the terms ‘research methodology’ and ‘research methods’
- Create a reading list about a specific theme or topic of relevance for researchers in your subject area
- Ask students to find research methods that are appropriate for, or often used in their subject area, and suggest why they might be useful

*Sage Research Methods* is a reliable and comprehensive resource that can provide excellent sources for researchers at all levels, as well as tools that can simplify and streamline the research process. If you want to find out more about this or any other library resources, please contact us at [learningskills@wrexham.ac.uk](mailto:learningskills@wrexham.ac.uk).

## References

Goodwin, J. (2012). *Sage secondary data analysis*. Sage Publications.

<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473963702>

Sage Publications. (n.d.). *Sage research methods*. <https://methods.sagepub.com/>

Thomas, N. (2020). *Get your data from social media: Little quick fix*. Sage Publications.

<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529738803>

Venturini, T., Acker, A., Plantin, J. & Walford, T. (2025). *The Sage handbook of data and society*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781036243395>