FIGURE 15.2 *A Review of Various Means of Data Collection*

Data Collection Method	Characteristics
Documents	Nonofficial papers: minutes, notes, plans Reveals actions, thinking, perceptions uninfluenced by the study
Records	Official documents: census, attendance, salaries More valid and reliable than documents
Observation	Observations of program context and activities, participant behaviors, and environments Can be structured or unstructured Useful in some way in almost every evaluation
Site Visits	A subset of observation, used by regulatory agencies
Surveys	Reports of attitudes, opinions, behavior, life circumstances Can be administered in person or by mail
Telephone Interviews	Purposes are similar to those of a survey, but questions can be more open-ended, but must be shorter Can develop rapport and use verbal prompts
Electronic Interviews or Surveys	Questions delivered and answered using computer technology Items may be constructed as open or closed
Interviews	Qualitative interviews are useful for eliciting values, perspectives, experiences, and more detailed responses Can be structured (face-to-face surveys) or qualitative
Focus Groups	Useful when group interaction can encourage and enhance responses
Tests	Used to examine knowledge and skills Primarily used in education and training
Alternative Assessments	Examines knowledge and skills in a direct way Viable alternative to paper-and-pencil measures