

Literature Reviews

Library Workshop

October 13, 2011

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What is a Literature Review?

The literature review should critically analyze a segment of a published body of knowledge through summary and syntheses, classification and comparison of prior research studies, reviews of literature, and theoretical articles.



What is a Literature Review?

- Discusses previous research on a topic
- Can be a part of a larger report or research project
- Can be a part of a grant proposal
- Can be a part of a thesis or dissertation
- Can be a stand alone publication published separately in a scholarly journal or even as a monograph
 - Example: [Annual Reviews](#)



A Literature Review is NOT...

- A collection of book reviews
- An annotated bibliography
- New primary scholarship



Why a Literature Review?

- To understand what is currently known about a topic
- To determine how the research you propose fits into a larger picture
- To offer an overview of significant literature published on a topic
- To see what has and has not been investigated
- To find what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic
- To determine the strengths and weaknesses of research on the topic
- To discover how a research project is related to the work of others
- To provide a solid background for research investigations



Components of a Literature Review

- Stating or formulating the problem
 - Similar to formulating a research query or hypothesis
- Stating the scope or focus of the reviewed material
 - This could include:
 - Time frame
 - Methodologies used in research
 - A particular aspect within a larger subject



Components of a Literature Review

○ The Literature Search

- Selection of databases, bibliographies, experts in the field
 - These vary with each subject area, but attention should be paid to resources that are interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in scope as well as formats.
 - Example: [Science Citation Index](#) for the Sciences, [Arts and Humanities Citation index](#) for all of the Humanities, and collections of electronic journals such as [JSTOR](#).



Components of a Literature Review

- The Literature Search, continued.
 - Formulating search parameters and strategies
 - Set your time frame
 - Select languages
 - Identify appropriate keywords, subject headings, or search phrases
 - Identify authors and scholars to be included in the search
 - Revise search strategies based on what you find



Components of a Literature Review

- The Literature Search, continued.
 - Evaluation of resources:
 - Which ones make significant contributions to the body of knowledge
 - Timeliness
 - Are authors published in peer reviewed journals?
 - Where and by whom is the research cited?



Search Tips

- Know your databases
 - Special search features – look for:
 - A thesaurus (Ex: [PsycINFO](#))
 - Subject headings or descriptors
 - Specialized indexes (Ex: [ATLA](#))
 - Faceted searching (Ex: [CatalogPlus](#), [Web of Science](#))
 - Times cited information (Ex: [Google Scholar](#))



Tracking your Resources

- Using citation management software
 - Refworks
 - EndNote
 - Zotero
 - Easybib



Tracking New Research and Publications

- SDI (selective dissemination of information)
- Tables of Contents services
- RSS (really simple syndication) feeds
- Alerts
- My Research ([Illumina](#))
- Search History/Alerts ([EBSCO](#))
- My Citation Alerts ([ISI](#))
- Save and run searches



Components of a Literature Review

○ Helpful hints

- Group your articles/books in categories
 - Methodologies used/results found, etc.
- Maintain a search record
 - Track where you have searched, and what search terms you have used
- Keep full bibliographic information for your sources
- Track cited references in books and articles, and look for citing references



Always Remember...

- If you need any help with your literature search, please [contact your librarian](#).
- Set up a [Research Consultation](#).
- Or, [Ask-A-Librarian](#).



The Literature Review

- Questions?



Bibliography

Articles:

[Doing a Literature Review](#), Jeffrey W. Knopf. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Volume 39, Issue 01, Jan 2006, pp 127-132.

[Process and Text: Teaching Students to Review the Literature](#), Ian McMenemy. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Volume 39, Issue 01, Jan 2006, pp 133-135.

[Research Methods for Comprehensive Science Literature Reviews](#), B.N. Brown. *Issues in Science & Technology Librarianship*, no. 57, Spring 2009.

[Scholars Before Researchers: On the Centrality of the Dissertation Literature Review in Research Preparation](#), D.N. Boote. *Educational Researcher*, Volume 34, Issue 06, 2005, pp 3-15.

Books:

Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper, Arlene Fink. L.A.: Sage, 2010.
Call Number: Currently on order.

The Literature Review, Lawrence A. Machi. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2009.
Call Number: LB 1047.3 .M33 2009

Online Tutorial:

[Literature Reviews: An Overview for Graduate Students](#). North Carolina State University Libraries.

Web Resources:

[Literature Reviews](#). The Writing Center – North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

[Writing a Psychology Literature Review](#). Psychology Writing Center – University of Washington.



Bibliography – Examples

- The Visual Arts and Cultural Migration in the 1930s and 1940s: A Literature Review, Marion F. Deshmukh. *Central European History*, Volume 41, Issue 04, Dec 2008, pp 569-604.
- The Changing Face of Diplomatic History: A Literature Review, Brenda Gayle Plummer. *History Teacher*, Volume 38, Issue 03, 2005, pp 385-400.
- Scotland Yard in the Bush: Medicine Murders, Child Witches and the Construction of the Occult: A Literature Review, Terence Ranger. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute/Revue de l'Institut Africain International*, volume 77, Issue 02, 2007 pp 272-283.

