Writing a Literature Review

FIVE QUICK TIPS
The Literature Review surveys and evaluates the relevant and related scholarship on a particular area of research or issue. It summarizes and evaluates the discussions and debate surrounding the topic, noting limitations, interpretations and approaches that support and establish the significance of your argument, research or methodology (Belcher, 2009).

✓ Presents a justification for your paper/research: show how your work fills a gap, or fulfills a need that has been identified by other researchers in the field.
✓ Informs your methodology
✓ Provides data that can be used to test your theories or results.
✓ Helps generate a new theory.

Prepare a Subject Overview - Summarize the topic under discussion, its components and related issue, and state the coverage and purpose of the literature review.
2. Conduct the Literature Search—Systematically search the related literature in relevant databases. Include a variety of sources.

Types of Sources
a. Original Literature: Primary sources e.g. Interviews, music scores,
b. Derivative literature: Tertiary sources e.g. text books, handbooks,
c. Contextual literature: Background information,
d. Methodological literature: Methodology information.
e. Theoretical literature: Conceptual Information- theoretical approaches in the field.
f. Related literature: Published research on the specific topic/area of research.

Selection for Inclusion
Use your argument (Subject overview) to guide the selection then read articles that fill a gap and relate to the argument. Select the most suitable ways to filter out unrelated materials and focus your review e.g.

a. Time period: e.g. include literature in the last 10 years
b. Types of publications: e.g. exclude conference proceedings.
c. Context: e.g. Concentrate on particular populations, methodologies, etc.
d. Kinds of studies: e.g. include only case studies,
e. Discipline: e.g. only journals in certain disciplines.
Evaluate the Literature—Decide which literature merits inclusion into the review based on the type of review. Select literature that makes a significant/unique contribution to the topic.

Review Purpose

a. Argumentative Review—literature selected that supports or refutes the argument. The purpose is to present the body of literature that surrounds the argument and connects your argument to the current debate.

b. Integrative Review—this literature is representative of the body of literature that addresses a specific issue or research problem. The purpose is to generate new theories or frameworks.

c. Historic Review—examines the literature through a specific period of time. The purpose is to place the research in a historical context.

d. Methodological Review—reviews the methods of analysis. The purpose is to inform new or existing methodologies.

e. Systematic Review—reviews, evaluates and collects all relevant published and unpublished studies (empirical evidence). The purpose is to answer a specific empirical question.

f. Theoretical Review—examines the corpus of theory that relates to the issue, phenomenon or theory under discussion.

Publication Evaluation—

a. What have you found out about the discussion?

b. Provenance: Author’s credentials. Are the author’s arguments supported by evidence? (References, empirical evidence)

c. Perspective: What is the author’s perspective and is contrary information attributed and discussed? How are the arguments similar/different?

d. Concepts: What theories, perspectives, or concepts seem to be most important? How are they defined and used? Which ones have not yet been explored?

e. Value: How does the work contribute to the discussion? Is it significant?

After evaluating the literature, begin to group the texts (informed by the purpose of the review and subject overview). Group by argument, period, theory, concept, etc.
4. Analyze & Interpret - Identify your relationship to the literature and then discuss, analyze and respond to the related concepts and arguments.

a. Address a gap in previous research: Add new interpretations or applications.  
b. Agree with the research and extend: Describe the relationships between the text, how they support or interpret each other.  
c. Refute the research and present other views: Resolve discrepancies and conflicts between contradictory views and theories.

5. Organize & Write - Let your argument guide the organization of the review organization. Read some related literature reviews.

Sources


Contact
Lorna M. Dawes, Assistant Professor
FYE & Learning Communities Librarian * Liaison for Science Literacy * Teaching, Learning & Teacher Education Liaison to the Discipline Based Educational Research (DBER) Group
University of Nebraska-Lincoln l 426 Love Library
402-472-4408 l ldawes2@unl.edu
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