Writing a Literature Review

Five quick tips to help you organize and prepare to write a literature review.
5 Quick Tips

Types of Reviews

1: Prepare the subject overview, description and scope

2: Identify and search the literature

CONTENTS

3: Appraise the literature

4: Synthesize the literature

5: Analyze and Interpret

Organize and Write Review
Writing A Literature Review

What is a Literature Review?

The Literature review surveys and evaluates the relevant and related scholarship on a particular area of research or issue. Thinking of research as a scholarly conversation, the literature review 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.

The literature review:

◊ Sets the context of the research: defines and justifies the scope of the topic.
◊ Positions the literature in the larger scholarly discourse.
◊ Shows how your work fills a gap in the research.
◊ Informs your methodology.
◊ Provides information that can be used to test your theories or results.
◊ Helps inform new theories, research and approaches.
### TYPES OF REVIEWS

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<th>Types of Reviews</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Reviews</td>
<td>Summaries of the literature: Provides a critical analysis of the literature (Critical Review); A summary of the literature that attempts to survey the literature (Overview Review); Presents the body of literature that surrounds the argument and connects your argument to the current debate. (Argumentative Review); Examines the literature through a specific period of time. Places the research in a historical context (Historical Review). Examines the corpus of theory that relates to the issue, phenomenon or theory under discussion (Theoretical Review)</td>
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<td>Mapping Review</td>
<td>Map out and categorize existing literature from which to commission further reviews and/or primary research by identifying gaps in research literature</td>
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<td>Meta-analysis</td>
<td>Technique that statistically combines the results of quantitative studies to provide a more precise effect of the results</td>
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<td>Mixed Studies Reviews</td>
<td>Combination of review approaches</td>
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<td>Qualitative systematic review</td>
<td>Method for integrating or comparing the findings from qualitative studies. It looks for ‘themes’ or ‘constructs’ that lie in or across individual qualitative studies</td>
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<td>Rapid review</td>
<td>Assessment of what is already known about a policy or practice issue, by using systematic review methods to search and critically appraise existing research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scoping Review</td>
<td>Preliminary assessment of potential size and scope of available research literature. Aims to identify nature and extent of research evidence (usually including ongoing research)</td>
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1. SUBJECT OVERVIEW

Prepare an overview of the subject or research question.

Consider the complete conversation, its components and related issues, and state the coverage and purpose of the literature review as clearly as you can.

2. CONDUCT THE LITERATURE SEARCH

The purpose of the literature search is to find the seminal works (pivotal, landmark studies/theories) pertaining to your area of research and identify the relevant bodies of literature and then systematically search the related literature.

TYPES OF SOURCES

Search for all relevant information sources:

◊ Original Literature: Primary sources e.g. Interviews, music scores,
◊ Derivative literature: Tertiary sources e.g. text books, handbooks,
◊ Contextual literature: Background information.
◊ Methodological literature: Methodology information.
◊ Theoretical literature: Conceptual Information- theoretical approaches in the field.
◊ Related literature: Published research on the specific topic/area of research.
SELECTION FOR INCLUSION

Develop a strategy for scoping and limiting your search using the thesis of the research should guide the selection. Identify suitable criteria that can be used to inform this selection process.

Bruce (2001) suggests using the following eight criteria:

◊ Relevance
◊ Comprehensiveness
◊ Breadth
◊ Exclusion
◊ Currency
◊ Availability
◊ Authority
3: APPRAISE THE LITERATURE

◊ Decide which literature merits inclusion into the review based on the type of review.
◊ Select the literature that makes a significant/unique contribution to the topic.
◊ Define the relevant bodies of the literature.

REVIEW THE PURPOSE

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

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.

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

Historical Review
examines the literature through a specific period of time. The purpose is to place the research in a historical context.
EVALUATE THE SOURCES

◊ What have you found out about the discussion?
◊ Provenance: Author’s credentials. Are the author’s arguments supported by evidence? (References, empirical evidence)
◊ Perspective: What is the author’s perspective and is contrary information attributed and discussed? How are the arguments similar/different?
◊ Concepts: What theories, perspectives, or concepts seem to be most important? How are they defined and used? Which ones have not yet been explored?
◊ Value: How does the work contribute to the discussion? Is it significant?

Address a gap in previous research: Add new interpretations or applications.
Agree with the research and extend: Describe the relationships between the text, how they support or interpret each other.
Disagree with the research and correct it: Resolve discrepancies and conflicts between contradictory views and theories.
3: SYNTHESIZE THE LITERATURE

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.
3: ANALYZE THE LITERATURE

Identify your relationship to the literature and then discuss, analyze and respond to the related concepts and arguments.
ORGANIZE AND WRITE THE REVIEW

Organize the review in the best way to address the research question.

◊ Chronological- a progression of time by trend or by publication.
◊ Thematic- organize around a topic or issue.
◊ Methodological- focus on the methods of the author,
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