

Literature Reviews

(a few informal thoughts ...)

Why?

- “Remember - eight hours of field-work can often save an hour in the library ...” (Anon.)
- Familiarise yourself with a topic
- Review state-of-the art research on a particular topic
- Help formulate your research questions (in some disciplines/universities, these are supposed to be derived from theoretical considerations)

IT Research – one school of thought (aka “The Rigour versus Relevance” debate)

Benbasat and Zmud (1999) Recommendations:

1: The foremost criterion to be applied in selecting research topics should be directly related to the future interest that key stakeholders (journals, colleagues, and practitioners) are likely to hold in a topic.

2: IS researchers should look to practice to identify research topics and look to the IS literature only after a commitment has been made to a specific topic

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4: When deciding whether or not to begin a new research project or a new manuscript, IS researchers should focus on the likely outcomes, rather than the inputs, of such efforts

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6: In order for IS research to be more relevant, it is important that authors develop frames of reference which are intuitively meaningful to practitioners to organize complex phenomena and to provide contingency approaches to action.

7: In order for IS research to be more relevant, IS academics should portray the outputs of their research in ways such that it might be utilized by practitioners to justify and rationalize IT-related initiatives.

8: The vast majority of IS research articles should be crafted in a clear, simple, and concise manner such that they are accessible by all the potential readership of a journal.

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Benbasat, I. and Zmud, R. W. (1999). Empirical Research in Information Systems: the Practice of Relevance, *MIS Quarterly*, 23, 3-16.

Plan your lit review

- Time
- Resources
- Write-up
- ***Update regularly***, as research project proceeds
 - New sub-topics?

Identify sources

- “Seed” – get one paper on subject (supervisor?) then expand
- On-line portal, or subject index?
- Library – catalogue & on-line refs (databases)
- Other libraries?
- Academic & professional bodies (eg AIS, ACM, IEEE)
- WWW
- Vendor White papers
- ...?

Reliability of sources

- Peer-reviewed journal & conf papers
- Peer-reviewed books
- “Scholarly” books (eg uni texts)
- Other books
- On-line (eg Wikipedia) – quality?
- Vendor White Papers – beware!!

Other points

- Use bibliographic tool (eg EndNote)
- Try to identify seminal papers
- Time span? - ≤ 10 years for masters and below
- *Critically analyse* all material
- Write-up:
 - Title: usually domain-specific (eg 'Literature Review', 'Theoretical Foundations')
 - See other examples in research domain
 - Write a narrative (or theme), not just a collection of individual item reviews