**Conducting a Literature Review**

**1. What is a Literature Review?**

A literature review summarises the existing research on a particular subject field to identify areas where further research is needed. It analyses and evaluates various sources, like academic journals, books, and online resources, to present a clear picture of the current state of knowledge.

**2. Why is a Literature Review Important?**

Literature reviews are crucial for:

* **Identifying a research topic and questions:** They help uncover gaps and inconsistencies in current knowledge, revealing potential research areas.
* **Contextualising research:** They situate your work within the existing body of knowledge, demonstrating its relevance and contribution.
* **Understanding key concepts and theories:** They provide a foundation for understanding the theoretical framework of your research area.
* **Developing a bibliography:** They help compile a list of relevant sources for further investigation and citation.
* **Informing research methodology:** They can suggest appropriate research methods based on previous studies in the field.
* **Analysing and interpreting results:** They provide a basis for comparing your findings with existing research.

**3. How Do I Evaluate Information Sources?**

Not all sources are created equal. Evaluate their quality and relevance by considering the following:

**For Academic & Professional Journals:**

* **Peer review:** Articles in peer-reviewed journals undergo rigorous evaluation by experts, ensuring quality and credibility.
* **Authorship:** Consider the authors' expertise and reputation in the field.
* **Relevance:** Ensure the article directly relates to your research topic.

**For Books:**

* **Authoritativeness:** Look for books written by recognised experts in the field.
* **Currency:** Check the publication date for up-to-date information.
* **Reputable publisher:** Choose books published by respected academic or professional publishers.

**For Web Resources:**

* **Authority:** Identify the author or organisation behind the website and evaluate their expertise and credibility.
* **Accuracy:** Cross-reference information with other reputable sources to ensure accuracy.
* **Purpose:** Consider the website's intended audience and purpose, as this can influence the information presented.
* **Currency:** Check for recent updates or revisions to ensure the information is current.

**4. What are the Best Ways to Locate Relevant Information Sources?**

Utilise various tools to locate relevant information:

* **Library catalogues:** Find books, journals, and other resources held by your library.
* **Search engines:** Locate web pages using keywords, but be discerning about the quality and reliability of information.
* **Online databases and indexing services (e.g., Emerald, JSTOR):** Access a vast collection of academic journal articles, conference papers, and other scholarly publications.

**5. How Can I Develop a Search Strategy for Finding Literature?**

Consider these approaches:

* **Citation pearl growing:** Start with a few relevant articles and follow their citations to discover related works.
* **Brief search:** Conduct a quick search using broad keywords to get an initial overview of the field.
* **Building blocks:** Break down your research question into key concepts and search using synonyms and related terms for each concept.
* **Successive fractions:** Refine your search by applying filters or limits (date, publication type, etc.) to manage large result sets.

**6. What are Conceptual Frameworks, and How Can They Be Helpful?**

Conceptual frameworks are visual representations (e.g., concept maps, mind maps) that help organise and understand the key concepts and relationships within your research area. They can assist in:

* **Identifying additional search terms:** Visualising relationships between concepts can spark ideas for new keywords.
* **Structuring the literature review:** Concept maps can provide a framework for organising your review by grouping related concepts and studies.
* **Understanding theories and relationships:** They help clarify your understanding of how different theories and concepts connect within your research area.

**7. What are the Steps Involved in Writing a Literature Review?**

Follow these steps to write a comprehensive review:

1. **Scan documents:** Quickly skim through potential sources to identify those most relevant to your topic.
2. **Make notes:** Summarise key points, arguments, and findings from each source. Note the source for accurate citation later.
3. **Structure the review:** Create a logical framework to organise your review based on themes, trends, or chronological order.
4. **Write the review:** Synthesise information from various sources into a coherent narrative, using your own words while accurately citing sources.
5. **Build a bibliography:** Compile a complete list of all sources cited in your review using your institution's preferred citation style.

**8. Why is Proper Citation Important in a Literature Review?**

Proper citation:

* **Gives credit to original authors:** Acknowledges the intellectual property of others and avoids plagiarism.
* **Supports your arguments:** Citing relevant research lends credibility to your own arguments and demonstrates the depth of your knowledge.
* **Allows for verification:** Allows readers to locate and consult the original sources for further information.

Remember to consult your institution's guidelines for the specific citation style required for your literature review.