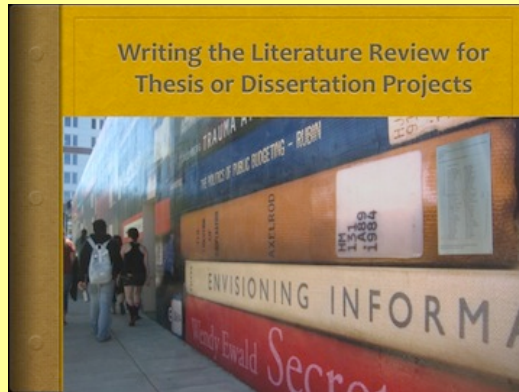


Writing the Literature Review Part 2



Your turn now!

Just watching ain't gonna get that lit review written!

These activities assume that you have read some or most of the literature for your literature review. But they also assume that you will re-read or revisit most of your sources in the process of writing.

Activity 1: What do you know about your field?

Write answers to these questions.

Is there a lot or a little research on your subject and what do you think that suggests?

- *The abundance of research on _____ suggests that _____.*
- *The relative dearth of scholarship on _____ suggests that _____.*

What trends do you see in the literature? What concerns / socio-cultural-economic issues do these trends reflect?

How / has the focus of research changed over the last _____ years?

What are the areas of general agreement or consensus in the literature?

What are areas of disagreement or controversy in the literature?

What is happening in the most recent research?

Activity 2: Spot the Rock Stars

Who are the rock stars in your field of literature? For each of them, write a paragraph explaining their central contribution. Have their ideas since been questioned or overturned? Why do they remain important to the field?

Activity 3: "Buckets" of Literature Within Your Project

Many literature reviews actually need to address more than one body of literature in order to do a responsible job.

What are the "buckets" or areas of literature in your project? List them.

For each "bucket," reverse engineer questions related to your research. The questions you write become "marching orders" for your reading. Reading to answer questions and find data does two things for your literature review:

- It gives you a specific reason to read rather than just reading aimlessly.
- It prompts you to write in active voice by presenting your sources as answering your questions rather than just writing summary about them.

Example

Bucket: Juvenile offenders who are drug users

(Questions to guide my reading)

- How is drug using defined in youth offenders?
- What percentage of juvenile offenders are drug users?
- What percentage of drug-using juvenile offenders have access to treatment?
- What approaches have been tried with drug using youth offenders? What is their efficacy?

Activity 4 (ongoing): What Part is Each of Your Sources Playing?

Different sources play different roles in your literature review. Some of these roles include:

- Providing definitions
- Providing data

- Confirmation of facts, trends, or generalizations that you mention (data, authority).
- Perspectives, arguments, interpretations.
- Previous research findings or methods.
- Evidence of the importance of your research.

As you read or re-read your sources, annotate them with "definition," "data," "argument," "supporting evidence," etc.

Slides

Big questions to ask about the literature

Is there a lot or a little research on your subject?

- *The abundance of research on _____ suggests that _____.*
- *The relative paucity of research on _____ suggests that _____.*

Big questions to ask about the literature

- How / has the focus of research changed over the last _____ years?
- What trends do you see in the research? What concerns / socio-cultural-economic issues do these trends reflect?
- What are the areas of general agreement or consensus in the literature?
- What are areas of disagreement or controversy in the literature?
- What is happening in the most recent research?

Process

- **Define your research question.** Make sure it is a *researchable* question or area. Understand your methodology and general research design before you start the lit review.
- **Find the literature.** When you are writing a dissertation, you will need to do exhaustive research, meaning that you cover nearly everything in the field. It does not mean that you have to write about everything.
- **Evaluate and select literature.** You should go through a selection process and decide which are key texts that you need to address. The literature review should be the product of active deliberation, not simply “finding enough texts.”
- **Identify the rock stars.** These are the foundational thinkers who laid the groundwork in your field.
- **Identify the primary camps or schools of thought.** Different schools of thought will have different followers. As you read, mark your sources to identify which group each piece/author belongs to.
- **Decide on an organizing principle.** Could be different variables in your study, different theories that inform your work, etc.

- For your own edification, **write a chronological history** of the evolution of ideas in your field. You will not usually present material strictly chronologically in the lit review, but you may present pieces of this chronology. You should be able to give the “big picture” image of trends and changes in the literature.

Sample Lit Review Project

Title:

Recidivism in juvenile drug users: a drug treatment approach to crime reduction.

Articulating the “gap” in the literature

- While the literature covers the larger issue of recidivism among the adult population, there is relatively little research on the issue of recidivism among juvenile offenders. This study looks specifically at ____.
- There is relatively little data on the relationship between drug treatment and recidivism. This study will add quantitative data to the existing research by ____.
- Current scholarly consensus is that incarceration is the most effective response to juvenile offenders. This case study challenges this theory by presenting data on drug treatment in a large metropolitan area.

When the literature is not a perfect fit with your research

- What we know from the larger body of literature is that _____. Although the literature deals only with the adult population, it is safe / not safe to assume that _____ would be applicable to the juvenile population.
- The literature on _____ has limited applicability to my study because _____.
- The literature on _____ is useful to my study even though _____ because _____.
- We can apply current research on _____ to _____ by accounting for _____.

The following slides do not appear in the video, but I wanted to add some extra material on finding and organizing your sources.

Ideas about finding, reading, and organizing your literature

How not to read for your literature review.

Everything. Indiscriminately.

The problem with this method is that you can keep reading forever and still not come out with a lit review.

Identify major “buckets” of literature within your research topic.

Title:

Recidivism in juvenile drug users: a drug treatment approach to crime reduction.

- Juvenile drug users
- Recidivism
- Drug treatment approach
- Crime reduction

For each “bucket,” reverse engineer questions related to your research.

Juvenile offenders who are drug users

- How is drug using defined in youth offenders?
- What percentage of juvenile offenders are drug users?
- What percentage of drug-using juvenile offenders have access to treatment?
- What approaches have been tried with drug using youth offenders? What is their efficacy?

The questions you write become “marching orders” for your reading.

Reading to answer questions and find data does two things for your literature review:

It gives you a specific reason to read rather than just reading aimlessly.

It prompts you to write in active voice by presenting your sources as answering your questions rather than just through summary.

Identify the role that different sources play in your research

- Providing definitions
- Confirmation of facts, trends, or generalizations that you mention (data, authority).
- Perspectives, arguments, interpretations.
- Previous research findings or methods.
- Evidence of the importance of your research.