

Literature Review



What do you mean I have to do a literature review?

I'm a MA candidate in Geosciences.

You're telling me I have to read Shakespeare?

I chose the sciences for a reason!

Literature Review



- The “literature” of the literature review refers to any collection of materials (peer reviewed journal, book, article, video clip, etc.) on a topic.
- Don’t worry: you don’t have to hunt down a Norton anthology.

Literature Review



- The goal of the literature review is to illustrate that the scholar, you, has “studied existing work in the field with insight” (Hayward and Wragg, 1982).

Literature Review



- The literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers.
- Your purpose is to convey to your audience what knowledge and ideas have been established on your topic, and what are the strengths and weaknesses.
- Must be defined by a guiding concept (your research objectives; problem or issue you discuss; and/or your argumentative thesis).

Annotated Bibliography: What is it?



- An annotated bibliography gives an account of the research that has been done on a given topic. Like any bibliography, an annotated bibliography is an alphabetical list of research sources. In addition to bibliographic data, an annotated bibliography provides a concise summary of each source and some assessment of its value or relevance. Depending on your assignment, an annotated bibliography may be one stage in a larger research project, or it may be an independent project standing on its own.

Annotated Bibliography



- Summarize (briefly) each item.
- Use the overall introduction and conclusion to state the scope of your review and formulate the question, problem, or concept your chosen material illuminates.
- Try and write a paragraph that introduces the focus of each section.

Literature Review



- You want to raise questions and identify the areas your thesis/project will explore.
- The review will develop a good working knowledge/foundation of your research in a specific area.
- Explore: will provide definition and framework for your research.

Literature Review



- Compare and Contrast different authors' views on same issue
- Group authors who draw similar conclusions
- Criticize aspects of methodology
- Note areas where authors disagree
- Highlight exemplary studies
- Identify patterns or trends in the lit
- Highlight gaps/omissions in previous research
- Show how your study relates to the lit in general
- Conclude by summarizing what the lit says

Literature Review



- Define and limit the problem
- Place your study in historical perspective
- Avoid unnecessary duplication
- Evaluate promising research methods
- Relate your findings to previous knowledge
- Suggest further research
- Provides your committee with the knowledge of your research interests

Literature Review: Writing Guidelines



- Establish your research questions and organize your literature into logical categories.
- Begin the lit review with an introduction to the topic: What is its significance and importance? Provide overview of review contents.
- Critically analyze relevant lit in relation to research questions stating lit content; implications of this knowledge; gaps/deficiencies; and any inconsistencies/conflicting points of view.

Literature Review: Writing Guidelines



- Ensure your own interpretations and that you have written a critical/evaluative review.
- The conclusion must draw together the important points and briefly explain how the information answers your original research question.
- Establish if more research is needed to provide a deeper understanding of the thesis/project.
- Avoid plagiarism.

Literature Review



Surveys scholarly articles, books, and other sources, such as dissertations, relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory/project.

Literature Review



Interaction between you the writer (MA candidate), your audience (Committee, Scholars), and the text (Thesis or Project).

Literature Review



The Literature Review must provide a description, summary, or critical evaluation of each work.

Literature Review



The purpose is to offer an overview of significant literature on a your topic. Ultimately, you are laying the foundation for your thesis and project. In other words, showing your committee and peers that you know what you're talking about—not just shooting from the hip.

7 Questions to Ask in Lit Review



1. What is my central question or issue that the literature can help define?

Questions to Ask in Lit Review



2. What is already known about the topic?

Questions to Ask in Lit Review



3. Is the scope of the literature being reviewed wide or narrow enough?

Questions to Ask in Lit Review



4. Is there a conflict or debate in the literature?

Questions to Ask in Lit Review



5. What connections can be made between the texts being reviewed?

Questions to Ask in Lit Review



6. What sort of literature should be reviewed?
Historical? Theoretical? Methodological?
Quantitative? Qualitative?

Questions to Ask in Lit Review



7. What criteria should be used to evaluate the literature being reviewed?

Key Terms for Lit Review



Compare and Contrast

Key Terms for Lit Review



Criticize

Key Terms for Lit Review



Highlight

Key Terms for Lit Review



Show

Key Terms for Lit Review



Identify

Key Terms for Lit Review



Define

Key Terms for Lit Review



Question

Selection of Sources



- Did you focus on primary sources with only selective use of secondary sources?
- Have you emphasized recent developments?
- Is the literature you selected relevant?
- Is your bibliographic data complete?

Organization Strategies



- Go old school and get index cards.
- Write down the correct citations on the index card.
- Use the remaining space to write down notes from the article (quotes, stats, etc.). Be careful in deciding what to write: make it count. And record the central ideas.
- The notes you jot down are the beginning of your abstract of the work.

Organization Strategies



Color-code the index cards.

Organization Strategies



Divide your index cards between primary and secondary sources.

Organization Strategies



Be in the moment: take copious notes of everything.

Organization Strategies



- Keep a notebook for notes that reflect your OWN observations and thinking.
- When you think your ideas can be written in the form of a problems, attempt a problem statement in the notebook.

Organization Strategies



Utilize the library technology: create a folder for your research, and have all the information texted to you.