GOALS OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

• To demonstrate familiarity with a body of knowledge and to establish credibility.
• To show the path of prior research and how a current project is linked to it.
• To integrate and summarize what is known in an area.
• To learn from others and stimulate new ideas.
OBJECTIVES

• Discuss the purposes of the literature review
• Differentiate between primary and secondary sources
• Identify steps in conducting a review of literature
• Identify characteristics of a good literature review
“Research literature reviews can be contrasted with more subjective examinations of recorded information. When doing a research review, you systematically examine all sources and describe and justify what you have done. This enables someone else to reproduce your methods and to determine objectively whether to accept the results of the review.

“Arlene Fink, Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper. Sage, 2009)
"There should be clear links between the aims of your research and the literature review, the choice of research designs and means used to collect data, your discussion of the issues, and your conclusions and recommendations. To summarize, we can say that the research should:

I. focus on a specific problem, issue or debate;
II. relate to that problem, issue or debate in terms that show a balance between the theoretical, methodological and practical aspects of the topic;
III. include a clearly stated research methodology based on the existing literature;
IV. provide an analytical and critically evaluative stance to the existing literature on the topic."
DEFINITION:

- A literature review is both a summary and explanation of the complete and current state of knowledge on a limited topic as found in academic books and journal articles.
- The process of reading, analyzing, evaluating, and summarizing scholarly materials about a specific topic.
- The results of a literature review may be compiled in a report or they may serve as part of a research article, thesis, or grant proposal.
“A Literature Review Surveys scholarly articles, books, and other sources (e.g., dissertations, conference proceedings) relevant to a topic for a thesis or dissertation. Its purpose is to demonstrate that the writer has insightfully and critically surveyed relevant literature on his or her topic in order to convince an intended audience that the topic is worth addressing” (105)

~from Writing the Successful Thesis and Dissertation: Entering the Discussion

By Irene L. Clark
PURPOSE OF A LITERATURE REVIEW

- The literature review is a critical look at the existing research that is significant to the work that you are carrying out.

- To provide background information
- To establish importance
- Helps map and define your research topic
- Presents a balanced view
- Justifies your research question
- Provides literature for you to compare your
PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

• Findings at the end.
• It gives readers easy access to research on a particular topic by selecting high quality articles or studies that are relevant, meaningful, important and valid and summarizing them into one complete report.
• It provides an excellent starting point for researchers beginning to do research in a new area by forcing them to summarize, evaluate, and compare original research in that specific area.
• It ensures that researchers do not duplicate work that has already been done.
• It can provide clues as to where future research is heading or recommend areas on which to focus.
PURPOSE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

- It highlights key findings.
- It identifies inconsistencies, gaps and contradictions in the literature.
- It provides a constructive analysis of the methodologies and approaches of other researchers.
- To learn methods and approaches that are appropriate for your study.
- To help focus your research and sharpen and refine your research questions.
CONTENT OF THE REVIEW

- **Introduction**
  - The introduction explains the focus and establishes the importance of the subject. It discusses what kind of work has been done on the topic and identifies any controversies within the field or any recent research which has raised questions about earlier assumptions. It may provide background or history. It concludes with a purpose or thesis statement. In a stand-alone literature review, this statement will sum up and evaluate the state of the art in this field of research; in a review that is an introduction or preparatory to a thesis or research report, it will suggest how the review findings will lead to the research the writer proposes to undertake.
CONTENT OF THE REVIEW

• Body
  • Often divided by headings/subheadings, the body summarizes and evaluates the current state of knowledge in the field. It notes major themes or topics, the most important trends, and any findings about which researchers agree or disagree. If the review is preliminary to your own thesis or research project, its purpose is to make an argument that will justify your proposed research. Therefore, it will discuss only that research which leads directly to your own project.
CONTENT OF THE REVIEW

- Conclusion
  - The conclusion summarizes all the evidence presented and shows its significance. If the review is an introduction to your own research, it highlights gaps and indicates how previous research leads to your own research project and chosen methodology. If the review is a stand-alone assignment for a course, it should suggest any practical applications of the research as well as the implications and possibilities for future research.
LITERATURE REVIEW AS PART OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

- Theoretical framework
- Problem/need significance
- Question/hypothesis
- Findings implications
- Design/methodology

ROL
WHAT DOES A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE PROVIDE?

• Uncovers new knowledge that can develop, refine, or validate theory

• Reveals research questions – gaps in current knowledge

• Provides latest knowledge for education

• Uncovers research findings that support evidence-based practice

• Used in all aspects of the research process
LITERATURE REVIEW IN RELATION TO THEORY, RESEARCH, EDUCATION & PRACTICE
TYPES OF INFORMATION SOURCES

• **primary**. Primary sources are “materials that you are directly writing about, the raw materials of your own research

• **Secondary**. Secondary sources are “books and articles in which other researchers report the results of their research based on (their) primary data or sources

• **Tertiary**. Tertiary sources are “books and articles based on secondary sources, on the research of others. Tertiary sources synthesize and explain the work of others and might be useful early in your research, but they are generally weak support for your own arguments
PRIMARY SOURCES

- Full text of articles, books, government reports, etc. that you need to read for your research project
- is written by a person(s) who developed the theory or conducted the research
- Original research reports by person who conducted the study
SECONDARY SOURCES

- Bibliographies, indexes and abstracts that you can use to help you to find the
- is written by a person(s) other than the individual who developed the theory or conducted the research
- Description of study(ies) by other than original researcher
- Examples of secondary sources include conferences, proceedings, journals, and books. Journal articles are often the most current source of information on a topic of study that is new or subject to rapid change. Lists of references at the end of each journal article can provide leads to further sources.
THE ROLE OF SECONDARY SOURCES

• Two general reasons for using secondary sources:
  • A primary source is literally unavailable
  • A secondary source can provide different ways of looking at an issue or problem

• Secondary sources should not be overused
PITFALLS OF SECONDARY SOURCES

• All of the theory’s concepts or aspects of the study and/or definitions may not be fully presented
• If all concepts or aspects are included, the definitions may be collapsed or paraphrased to such a degree that it no longer represents the theorist’s actual work
• The critique (whether positive or negative) is based on the presentation of incomplete or interpreted data and therefore less useful to the consumer
TERTIARY SOURCES

• Examples of tertiary sources include dictionaries, encyclopedias, guides, and handbooks.
• Dictionaries and encyclopedias are excellent starting points for research. They can provide general background information to help narrow or broaden the focus of a topic, define unfamiliar terms, and offer bibliographies of other sources. Some works include an index, which will provide excellent access to a subject.
SOURCES FOR LITERATURE REVIEWS

• Internet
  • Use keyword searches in Google Scholar: http://scholar.google.com/

• Digital Libraries
  • Need to use keyword searches to identify relevant articles

• Libraries
  • Look through the list of journals and browse the books on the shelves to find relevant ones
TYPES OF INFORMATION SOURCES FOR A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Conceptual Literature**
  - Theoretical
  - Literature review article
  - Scholarly literature

- **Data-based Literature**
  - Scientific literature
  - Research literature
  - Research study
  - Study

- LB-W & H pp. 91-93
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF DIFFERENT SOURCES

- Books vs. journal articles vs. conference proceedings vs. the Internet
- Which tend to be the best for
  - Currency?
  - Authority?
  - Understandability?
- Academic papers are quality controlled – many are rejected as being incorrect or uninteresting
CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LITERATURE REVIEWS

• Outlining important research trends
• Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of existing research
• Identifying potential gaps in knowledge
• Establishing a need for current and/or future research projects
TYPES OF REVIEWS

• Self-study reviews.
  • Increases reader’s confidence in an area that is rarely published.
• Context reviews.
  • Places project in the big picture.
• Historical reviews.
  • Traces the development of an issue over time.
• Theoretical reviews.
  • Compares how different theories address an issue.
• Methodological reviews.
  • Points out how methodologies vary by study.
• Integrative reviews.
  • Summarises what is known at a particular point in time.
1. Find a working topic.
   • Look at your specific area of study. Think about what interests you, and what is fertile ground for study. Talk to your professor, brainstorm, and read lecture notes and recent issues of periodicals in the field.

2. Review the literature.
   • Using keywords, search a computer database. It is best to use at least two databases relevant to your discipline.
   • Remember that the reference lists of recent articles and reviews can lead to valuable papers.
   • Make certain that you also include any studies contrary to your point of view.
3. Focus your topic narrowly and select papers accordingly.
   • Consider the following:
     • What interests you?
     • What interests others?
     • What time span of research will you consider?
     • Choose an area of research that is due for a review.
4. Read the selected articles thoroughly and evaluate them.
   • What assumptions do most/some researchers seem to be making?
   • What methodologies do they use? - what testing procedures, subjects, material tested?
   • Evaluate and synthesize the research findings and conclusions drawn.
   • Note experts in the field: names/labs that are frequently referenced.
   • Note conflicting theories, results, methodologies.
   • Watch for popularity of theories and how this has/has not changed over time.
5. Organize the selected papers by looking for patterns and by developing sub-topics.
   • Findings that are common/contested
   • Two or three important trends in the research
   • The most influential theories

6. Develop a working thesis.
   Write a one- or two-sentence statement summarizing the conclusion you have reached about the major trends and developments you see in the research that has been done on your subject.
7. Organize your own paper based on the findings from steps 4 & 5.
Develop headings/subheadings. If your literature review is extensive, find a large table surface, and on it place post-it notes or filing cards to organize all your findings into categories. Move them around if you decide that (a) they fit better under different headings, or (b) you need to establish new topic headings.

8. Write the body of the paper
Follow the plan you have developed above, making certain that each section links logically to the one before and after, and that you have divided your sections by themes or subtopics, not by reporting the work of individual theorists or researchers.
9. Look at what you have written; focus on analysis, not description. Look at the topic sentences of each paragraph. If you were to read only these sentences, would you find that your paper presented a clear position, logically developed, from beginning to end? If, for example, you find that each paragraph begins with a researcher’s name, it might indicate that, instead of evaluating and comparing the research literature from an analytical point of view, you have simply described what research has been done. This is one of the most common problems with student literature reviews. So if your paper still does not appear to be defined by a central, guiding concept, or if it does not critically analyse the literature selected, then you should make a new outline based on what you have said in each section and paragraph of the paper, and decide whether you need to add information, to delete off-topic information, or to re-structure the paper entirely.
STEPS FOR WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW

- Planning
- Reading and Research
- Analyzing
- Drafting
- Revising
PLANNING

• Focus
  • What is the specific thesis, problem, or research question that my literature review helps to define?
  • Identifying a focus that allows you to:
    • Sort and categorize information
    • Eliminate irrelevant information

• Type
  • What type of literature review am I conducting?
  • Theory; Methodology; Policy; Quantitative; Qualitative
PLANNING

• Scope
  • What is the scope of my literature review?
  • What types of sources am I using?

• Academic Discipline
  • What field(s) am I working in?
READING AND RESEARCHING

- Collect and read material.
- Summarize sources.
  - Who is the author?
  - What is the author's main purpose?
  - What is the author’s theoretical perspective? Research methodology?
  - Who is the intended audience?
  - What is the principal point, conclusion, thesis, contention, or question?
  - How is the author’s position supported?
  - How does this study relate to other studies of the problem or topic?
  - What does this study add to your project?
- Select only relevant books and articles.
A literature review is never just a list of studies—it always offers an argument about a body of research.

Analysis occurs on two levels:
- Individual sources
- Body of research
FOUR ANALYSIS TASKS OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

- SUMMARIZE
- SYNTHESIZE
- CRITIQUE
- COMPARE
EVALUATIVE ADJECTIVES

- Unusual
- Small
- Simple
- Exploratory
- Limited
- Restricted
- Flawed

- Complex
- Competent
- Important
- Innovative
- Impressive
- Useful
- Careful
ANALYZING: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- Once you have summarized, synthesized, compared, and critiqued your chosen material, you may consider whether these studies demonstrate:
  - The topic’s chronological development.
  - Different approaches to the problem.
  - An ongoing debate.
  - A “seminal” study or studies.
  - A paradigm shift.
DRAFTING: AN OVERVIEW

To help you approach your draft in a manageable fashion, this section addresses the following topics:

- Exigency
- Thesis Statement
- Organization
- Introduction and conclusion
- Citations
THESIS STATEMENTS

• The thesis statement offers an argument about the literature. It may do any of or a combination of the following:
  
  • Offer an argument and critical assessment of the literature (i.e. topic + claim).
  • Provide an overview of current scholarly conversations.
  • Point out gaps or weaknesses in the literature.
  • Relate the literature to the larger aim of the study.
EXAMPLES: THESIS STATEMENTS

1) In spite of these difficulties we believe that preservice elementary art teachers and classroom teachers need some knowledge of stage theories of children’s development...[then goes on to review theories of development]

2) Research on the meaning and experience of home has proliferated over the past two decades, particularly within the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, human geography, history, architecture and philosophy. . . . Many researchers now understand home as a multidimensional concept and acknowledge the presence of and need for multidisciplinary research in the field. However, with the exception of two exemplary articles by Després (1991) and Somerville (1997) few have translated this awareness into genuinely, interdisciplinary studies of the meaning of home.
EXAMPLES: THESIS STATEMENTS

3) Polyvalency refers to the simultaneous binding of multiple ligands on one entity to multiple receptors on another. Polyvalent interactions are ubiquitous in nature, with examples including the attachment of viruses to target cells, bacteria to cells, cells to other cells, and the binding of antibodies to pathogens. . . . In this article, I review recent developments in polyvalency and discuss the numerous opportunities for chemical engineers to make contributions to this exciting field, whose applications include drug discovery, tissue engineering, and nanofabrication.

4) In this article, we review and critique scholarship on place-based education in order to consider the ingredients of a critical place-based pedagogy for the arts and humanities. . . . We begin by reviewing ecohumanism's call for a more locally responsive education in light of the marginalization of place and community…
There is currently much controversy over how nonhuman primates understand the behavior of other animate beings. On the one hand, they might simply attend to and recall the specific actions of others in particular contexts, and therefore, when that context recurs, be able to predict their behavior (Tomasello & Call, 1994, 1997). On the other hand, they might be able to understand something of the goals or intentions of others and thus be able to predict others’ behaviors in a host of novel circumstances. Several lines of evidence (e.g., involving processes of social learning; Tomasello, 1997) and a number of anecdotal observations (e.g., Savage-Rumbaugh, 1984) have been adduced on both sides of the question, but few studies directly address the question: Do nonhuman primates understand the intentions of others?
CONCLUSIONS

• Summarize the main findings of your review.
• Provide closure.
• Explain “so what?”
• Implications for future research.
• OR
• Connections to the current study.
In summary, although there is some suggestive evidence that chimpanzees may understand others’ intentions, there are also negative findings (e.g., Povinelli et al., 1998) and a host of alternative explanations. As a consequence, currently it is not clear whether chimpanzees (or other nonhuman primates) distinguish between intentional and accidental actions performed by others. In contrast, there are several studies indicating that children as young as 14 months of age have some understanding of others’ intentions, but the lack of comparative studies makes it difficult to know how children compare to apes. This study is the first to directly compare children, chimpanzees, and orangutans with the use of a nonverbal task in which the subjects were to discriminate between the experimenter’s intentional and accidental actions.
CITING SOURCES

If it’s not your own idea (and not common knowledge)—DOCUMENT IT!

• Paraphrase key ideas.
• Use quotations sparingly.
• Introduce quotations effectively.
• Use proper in-text citation to document the source of ideas.
• Maintain accurate bibliographic records.
CITING SOURCES: THINGS TO AVOID

• Plagiarism
• Irrelevant quotations.
• Un-introduced quotations.
EXAMPLES: CITING SOURCES

• Quoting: Despite pleasant depictions of home life in art, the fact remains that for most Seventeenth-century Dutch women, the home represented a curtailment of some degree of independence. Art historian Laurinda Dixon writes that “for the majority of women, however, home was a prison, though a prison made bearable by love and approval” (1995, p. 136).

• Paraphrasing: Despite pleasant depictions of home life in art, the fact remains that for most Seventeenth-century Dutch women, the home represented a curtailment of some degree of independence. Art historian Laurinda Dixon argues that the home actually imprisoned most women. She adds that this prison was made attractive by three things: the prescriptions of doctors of the day against idleness, the praise given diligent housewives, and the romantic ideal based on love and respect (1995, p. 136).
SOME TIPS ON REVISING

• Title: Is my title consistent with the content of my paper?
• Introduction: Do I appropriately introduce my review?
• Thesis: Does my review have a clear claim?
• Body: Is the organization clear? Have I provided headings?
• Topic sentences: Have I clearly indicated the major idea(s) of each paragraph?
• Transitions: Does my writing flow?
• Conclusion: Do I provide sufficient closure? (see p. 10)
• Spelling and Grammar: Are there any major spelling or grammatical mistakes?
WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW: IN SUMMARY

• As you read, try to see the “big picture”—your literature review should provide an overview of the state of research.

• Include only those source materials that help you shape your argument. Resist the temptation to include everything you’ve read!

• Balance summary and analysis as you write.

• Keep in mind your purpose for writing:
  • How will this review benefit readers?
  • How does this review contribute to your study?

• Be meticulous about citations.
REVIEWING THE LITERATURE

Define your idea in as general terms as possible by using general sources.

Search through the secondary sources.

Search through the primary sources.

Organize your notes.

Write your proposal.
IMPORTANCE OF CITATIONS

• Make sure that you reference everything, including full authors’ names, year of publication, publisher, titles, chapter titles and page numbers.
• Do this every time you read an article, book chapter or book or when you photocopy. This really saves time in your project.
• Don’t leave the bibliography until the end of the report. Write it up as you go along.
• Be aware from the onset what style of referencing your college/institution or publisher uses – Chicago, Harvard, APA etc. These can usually be downloaded from the web.