

Purpose of the Literature Review

Boote, D.N. & Beile, P. (2005). Scholars before researchers: On the centrality of the dissertation literature review in research preparation. *Educational Researcher* 34/6, 3-15.

What is a literature review?

(adapted from: <http://www.library.cqu.edu.au/tutorials/litreviewpages/>)

A literature review is an evaluative report of studies found in the literature related to your selected area. The review should describe, summarize, evaluate and clarify this literature. It should give a theoretical basis for the research and help you determine the nature of your own research. Select a limited number of works that are central to your area rather than trying to collect a large number of works that are not as closely connected to your topic area.

A literature review goes beyond the search for information and includes the identification and articulation of relationships between the literature and your field of research. While the form of the literature review may vary with different types of studies, the basic purposes remain constant:

- Provide a context for the research
- Justify the research
- Ensure the research hasn't been done before (or that it is not just a "replication study")
- Show where the research fits into the existing body of knowledge
- Enable the researcher to learn from previous theory on the subject
- Illustrate how the subject has been studied previously
- Highlight flaws in previous research
- Outline gaps in previous research
- Show that the work is adding to the understanding and knowledge of the field
- Help refine, refocus or even change the topic

For the stages of a literature review see:

<http://www.library.cqu.edu.au/tutorials/litreviewpages/topic.htm>

Strategies for your Literature Review*

*Loosely based on the outline in: Kirby, S., Greaves, L. & Reid, C. (2006). Searching the Literature. In *Experience research social change: Methods beyond the mainstream* (pp. 101-117). Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press. Education Library Q180.55 M4 K5 2006t

Tips	Method
Jump offs	Start with handbooks and research overviews and review their references.
Track and map authors.	Track the names of key authors and locate their original works.
Use library guides if appropriate.	See http://library.queensu.ca/research/subjects Use the EDUC890 handout under Faculty/graduates to get started on your research: http://library.queensu.ca/webedu
Record key definitions and their context.	Look for patterns and frameworks in what is written about a topic such as the context - social, political, historical.
Establish a personal search pattern.	Determine types of materials needed (books, primary sources, government documents, statistics, scholarly articles, opinion pieces, etc.) and how to access them. Become aware of your search patterns. Track your <u>strategy</u> including reference tools, databases, authors, questions, and search problems.
Make strategic use of journal index and search engine advanced search capabilities.	Work out the best way to search each journal index along with Google and Google Scholar. List search terms, subjects, and descriptors which are specific to each index. Find out how to narrow searches. Search key authors.
Use citation indexes.	Search key authors and specific works in a citation index to find who has cited them. See Web of Science; Google Scholar
Track your references.	Use RefWorks to manage references and create APA bibliographies. Learn the elements of APA: http://apastyle.apa.org/ Path: Research Tools >> Find Journal Articles >> type Refworks in box >> set up your account
Talk to your librarian!	Make an appointment with one of us to review your needs.