Introduction to the Literature Review

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Finding, assessing, and reporting on the scholarly writings (literature) on a topic

It’s a process of identifying what is known about a body of research, reviewing or assessing the findings, and ending up with new literature as an end result.
What is scholarly literature?

- Journal articles: peer reviewed (refereed)

- Grey literature: conference & scientific meeting papers, preliminary reports, technical reports, government reports
  - Grey Literature Report
  - Generally not peer-reviewed, but still can be scholarly

- Books
  - Books can identify seminal research

- Dissertations & Theses
Journal Article types

- Clinical Trials
- Opinions
- Reviews
- Case Studies/case reports
- Newspaper article
- Patient Education Handout
- Personal narratives
- Practice Guideline
- Randomized Controlled Trial
- Research reports: quantitative, qualitative, mixed, comparative studies, etc.
Extent of the review (depends on purpose & type)

- Selective: find the major studies
- Embedded in a larger work (dissertation, major research article)
- Stand-alone: the whole work reviews the literature
- Class assignment to demonstrate your understanding of a topic
Can have many purposes:

- Get a broad overview of a topic
- Do an extensive research study of a topic
- Synthesize various types of literature together
- Develop policies
- Finding evidence-based interventions
- Discover gaps in knowledge to justify future research
- Writing a research proposal – gives justification or context to your own research or thesis
- Demonstrate your knowledge
Types of Reviews

- Review articles: examine literature from point of view of the author
- Narrative: summarizes and critiques the literature
- Systematic: rigorous, well-focused, extensive report on published and unpublished scholarly literature
- Meta-analysis: quantitatively synthesizes findings of comparable studies
Steps in the Literature Review

1. Choose a topic
2. Search for potential references.
3. Retrieve and save relevant citations and/or full text of relevant results
4. Check references in relevant articles for new potential references
5. Organize references
6. Analyze & Synthesize: integrate notes, references, etc.
7. Write the literature review
Steps of a Lit Review Summarized

- Define your research topic
- Search the literature
- Analyze & synthesize
- Write
How to Define a Topic

Formulate a problem or question:

- What is known about obesity prevention programs? (vague)
- Do School–based nutrition programs influence children’s eating habits? (better)
- Be as precise as possible as to what you want to review (depends on your purpose)
  - Only current issues (programs in last 5 years)
  - Historic trends
  - International or US?
  - Certain populations? Disadvantaged youth, etc.
  - Specific age group? Pre–school, etc.
Refining the topic

- Identify key words for your topic
- Find existing literature reviews
  - Cochrane Library
  - Search for reviews in databases
- Identify the appropriate sources – where to search and what types of sources do you want
Save & organize as you search

- Reference management program (EndNote, Zotero)

- Create personal accounts in databases: MyNCBI in PubMed; EBSCOhost folders; My Citations in Google Scholar

- Index cards
  - Make sure have complete citations!
Analyze & Synthesize

- Evaluate what you find –
  - strengths & weaknesses,
  - Develop your critical thinking skills

- CASP: Critical Appraisal Skills Programme Checklist (http://www.casp-uk.net/)
Evaluating a Web Site

- **Authorship**
  - Who wrote it?
  - What else have they written? How much?

- **Source**
  - Evidence of peer-review?
  - Is there a correlation between the apparent source & format of the information presented?

- **Context**
  - Is related and/or reputable information located on the same URL root?
  - Which organizations acknowledge and/or value the author?
Final Written review depends on purpose
  ◦ A Summary reporting on what you found
  ◦ Comprehensive as for a systematic review or a dissertation
  ◦ Systematic reviews have specific structure
  ◦ Journals have their own submission guidelines
  ◦ Dissertation advisor requirements

See LibGuide:  How to Write a Literature Review in Allied Health
Searching & FINDING: Preliminary

- Search library catalog for background info: books, eBooks, encyclopedias

- Be familiar with library resources – save money & time

- Tip: finding 50 articles first
  - Check their references to find more articles

- Focus on articles, use databases to find the articles
Popular databases

- Free: ERIC, GoogleScholar, PubMed
  - Access PubMed@LLU through the Library!
- Commercial (licensed by the library)
  - EBSCOhost databases: Cinahl, Academic Search premier
  - Web of Science (Science Citation, Social Science Citation Indexes)
- Specialty: Ageline (for search on elder populations)
Organize as you go—EndNote Example
EndNote LibGuide

EndNote X6: New Features

- Cite While You Write in Apple Pages
- How to use EndNote's Cite While You Write features in Apple Pages 10, including inserting citations, adding page numbers, changing styles, deleting references from a paper, and using EndNote with full footnote styles such as Chicago and Turabian.

- Comparison Between EndNote and EndNote Web
  A quick comparison between EndNote, EndNote Web and other citation managers (RefWorks, Zotero). This is compiled by University of Wisconsin (Madison) Libraries.

- EndNote Web - Overview
  This tutorial gives you an overview of the different functions available in EndNote Web.

Instructions for downloading EndNote for Loma Linda University faculty, students and Loma Linda University Health Care clinicians and employees.

- Go to University Portal at http://myllu.lulu.edu.
  - If you don't yet have a portal page call the University Help Desk x48611.
  - Log in with your username and password.
  - Scroll down to see the box labeled “Software Downloads”.
  - Download EndNote X6.
  - Important Note: Click “extract” on the zip drive to install files.
  - To search the Loma Linda University Libraries catalog copy the “Loma Linda University” Endnote Connection file from the extraction folder to the C:Program Files EndNote Connections folder.

For problems downloading EndNote OR Cite-While-You-Write plug-in for Microsoft Word, please call Help Desk at x48611.

Creating an EndNote Web Account

Go to myendnoteweb

- On the EndNote Web Logon page, click on Sign Up link to create an account.
- Fill in each field with an asterisk. These are required fields.
- Note that the password you create must be at least 8 characters long and must contain at least one number and one symbol (password is case sensitive).
Questions?

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