"A researcher cannot perform significant research without first understanding the literature in the field.”

— Boote and Beile, 2005

**Writing your literature review**

STUDY SMARTER RESEARCH SERIES

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**Literature reviews**

- Contextualise your research
- Bring to attention significant and/or similar research
- Lead to your hypothesis/research question
- Point to appropriate methodology
- Are partial in your proposal
- Will continue throughout the research process

**Literature reviews – what’s involved?**

- Evaluation
- Description
- Summaries
- Analysis
- Clarification
- Synthesis
- Interpretation

**Where do we find literature reviews?**

**GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

**SEPARATE CHAPTER**

**PART OF EACH CHAPTER**

Reference to the literature permeates your thesis

**Where to start**

**LANDMARK STUDIES**

**SIGNIFICANT AUTHORS**

**YOUR SUPERVISOR**

“If you could recommend only one book or article written in the last 10 years about my topic, what would it be?”
**What's in, what's out**

**Summaries and critical comment on previous research**

When/if gaps in the literature are identified, new avenues of research may be mentioned

**New ideas not already in the literature**

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**Towards writing critically**

Engaged and active note taking / note making is essential to the

- literature review
- thesis/dissertation writing process

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**Towards writing critically**

**Read widely & keep reading.**

**Talk about your research.**

**Develop a system for recording your ideas.**

** Attend seminars, conferences whenever you can.**

**Collect inspirational ideas/quotes.**

**Be open to finding ideas in unexpected places.**

“‘It’s always been in between the things I thought I was doing that the real work has happened.’ William Kentridge

**Play with ideas – write them up in different ways.**

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**RESEARCH is Rational & CREATIVE**

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**Consider your structure – stay focussed**

*When reviewing the literature, keep in mind your research aim(s)*

- research question/hypothesis(es)

**INTRODUCTION**

**BODY**

**CONCLUSION**

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**Organise your ideas** find a method that suits you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbey 2006</td>
<td>Compare with Raj 2007</td>
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<td>Brown 2007</td>
<td>Methodology flawed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Café 2014</td>
<td>Can use this theory but...</td>
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<td>Ealeson 2012</td>
<td>Contradiction, Abbey 2006</td>
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<td>Nguyen 2010</td>
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<td>Raj 2007</td>
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<td>Yeung 2011</td>
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**Working with ideas**

- Read widely & keep reading.
- Talk about your research.
- Develop a system for recording your ideas.
- Attend seminars, conferences whenever you can.
- Collect inspirational ideas/quotes.
- Be open to finding ideas in unexpected places.
- “It’s always been in between the things I thought I was doing that the real work has happened.” William Kentridge
- Play with ideas – write them up in different ways.
Introduction - locate your research within the field

- Identify the big picture.
- Establish the reason for the review.
- Mention your aim(s) & hypothesis/research question.
- Identify key researchers in the field.
- Identify key theoretical and/or methodological perspectives/conflicts.
- Make the case for the importance of your research.
- State how the review will be organised and what will be covered (or not) in the review.

Body - each paragraph

- Begin with a topic sentence (your voice).
- Develop with reference to relevant studies.
- Discuss & analyse the studies, e.g. similarities, conflicts, relevance of methodology, evidence of new trends, strengths/weaknesses (your critical voice).
- Show relevance to your research.
- Conclude with a brief statement (your voice) or a link to the next point.

Body - towards a critical examination

- Group authors who draw similar conclusions.
- Highlight exemplary studies.
- Compare and contrast authors’ views.
- Note areas of disagreement, strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify patterns or trends.
- Critique aspects of methodology.
- Highlight gaps and omissions.
- Mention questions left unanswered.

Conclusion

- Summarise the major contributions of significant studies (your voice).
- Evaluate the current state of knowledge, for example:
  - flaws in methodology
  - inconsistencies in theories/findings (your voice).
- Comment on the relationship between the topic of the literature review and the larger area of study (your voice).
- State how you would build on what has already been done / fill the gaps in the existing knowledge (your voice).

Lit review v annotated bibliography

A good way to

- become familiar with the ideas in your main sources
- get clear about how to categorise your sources
- compare theories, methodologies,
- become aware of authors’ major differences, conflicts, similarities

They can be used in the preparation of your literature review as the can help you evaluate the usefulness of certain papers, etc.
Let’s analyse some examples

Consider the examples provided in light of the material covered during this workshop.

Don’t forget to try these techniques

Free writing
- Write for a set time (e.g. 10 minutes)
- Don’t stop writing
- Write in sentences
- Write whatever comes into your head
- Don’t have to stick to a single topic
- Write for you alone: no-one else to read it

Generative writing
- Write for a set time (e.g. 10 minutes)
- Don’t stop writing
- Write in sentences
- Stick to one topic (possibly a topic from your free writing)
- Let someone else read it (optional)

References & additional resources


Graduate Research Booklets on a range of topics for Arts, Humanities and Social Science and Applied Science students http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/students/resources/workshops/booklets


Manchester University Phrasebank http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/


Thesis Whisperer http://thesiswhisperer.com/about/

Tomorrow’s Professor, sponsored by Stanford University http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-edu/temp/fts/prof/postings.php

Upcoming Honours & Masters workshops

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<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 24 March 12-1</td>
<td>Write your thesis or dissertation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs 26 March 1-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 31 March 12-1</td>
<td>Communicate your research to an audience</td>
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<td>Thurs 2 April 1-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 14 April 12-1</td>
<td>Practise your seminar presentation</td>
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<td>Thurs 16 April 1-2</td>
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Let us know if you’re interested Cheryl.Lange@uwa.edu.au