Writing Chapter 2: Review of the Literature
What Is a Literature Review?

- Mainly Chapter 2 of a doctoral dissertation
- An exhaustive exposition of the literature sources (especially methods and findings) that a researcher consulted in order to understand and investigate his or her research problem
- Built from the annotated bibliography assignment (#4) from the Methods of Inquiry (MOI) course
Purpose of a Literature Review

- “Put your salesperson’s hat and sell your idea!”
- Use the literature to explain your research.
- Show why your research needs to be carried out (justification).
- Show how you choose to work with specific methodologies or theories.
- Show how your work adds to the research already carried out.
Components of Chapter 2

- Discussion of theoretical or conceptual framework of study
- Synthesis of up-to-date research findings
- Discussion of the role of current research (replication, variation, etc.) and role of independent variables
- Review of strengths and weaknesses of prior studies
- Critique of literature in light of any controversial methodological decisions to be made
- Research questions
Always Review the ARC Website

- [http://www.fischlerschool.nova.edu/](http://www.fischlerschool.nova.edu/)
- applied-research/arc
- The online *Applied Dissertation Procedures Manual* suggests that Chapter 2
  - be exhaustive
  - contains at least 30 references from recent peer-reviewed research articles
  - comprises at least 25-30 pages
Information on Literature Review Sources

- NSU’s online library is used to obtain sources
- Sources should mainly be journal articles
  - Primarily refereed articles (i.e., editors publish only the most relevant and reliable research)
- Should offer relatively concise and up-to-date research
More on Sources

Books

- may not be up to date; mainly used for the theoretical framework
- are intended for teaching, not for research
- offer a good starting point in finding more detailed sources.
More on Sources

**Conference proceedings are**

- very useful in providing the latest published and unpublished research.
- helpful in providing information about other researchers and their scholarly activities.
More on Sources

**Government and corporate reports**

- Governmental departments, corporations, and commissions may carry out research.
- Their published findings can provide a useful source of supporting information.
More on Sources

Newspapers

• provide information that is of very limited use in a literature review.

• may be more helpful in providing information about recent trends, discoveries, or changes.
More on Sources

Theses and dissertations

- can be difficult to obtain because they may be unpublished and available only from the library shelf or through interlibrary loan.
- represent the work of students who may not be experienced researchers.
- should be considered with greater caution than published research.
More on Sources

The Internet

- Anyone can post information on the Internet, so the quality may not be reliable.
- The information may be intended for a general audience and, therefore, may not be suitable for inclusion in a literature review.
- The quality of some refereed electronic journals may be more reliable (depending on the reputation of the journal).
More on Sources

Magazines

• Magazines intended for a general audience (e.g., *Time*) are unlikely to be useful in providing the type of information that a researcher needs.

• Specialized magazines may be more useful (e.g., business magazines for management students).

• Magazines may be useful as a starting point for research.
Tips on How to Write a Good Literature Review

- It is a process
- Do not assume that you will read everything related to your research.
- Writing can help you to understand and find relationships between the sources that you have researched; therefore, do not put writing off until you have finished your readings.
- Writing is a way of thinking, so allow yourself time to write as many drafts as you need, changing your ideas and information as you learn more about the context of your research problem.
- Always keep bibliographic information in your notes. Include accurate and properly cited references in your writing.
More Tips on How to Write a Good Literature Review

- Writing is similar to the traditional 5-paragraph essay (intro/body/conclusion)
  - Sentences should be connected
  - Paragraphs should be connected
  - Use of transitional words and phrases

- Inclusion of a short introduction to Chapter 2
- Role of subheadings
- Always consider the “other side of the coin”
- Inclusion of a short conclusion to Chapter 2
More Tips on How to Write a Good Literature Review

**Read with a purpose**

- When summarizing the literature, you must also decide which ideas or information are important to your research (i.e., so that you can emphasize them).
- You should also look for the major concepts, conclusions, theories, and arguments that underlie the literature.
- Look for similarities and differences with closely related work.
Write with a purpose

- Your optimal goal should be to evaluate and show relationships between past research and your own.
- To do this effectively, you should carefully plan how you are going to organize your work.
- A chronological system will not be an effective way to organize your work (in some situations).
More Tips on How to Write a Good Literature Review

**Plan your writing**

- Find a way to organize your material so that you know what you are going to write about, in what order, and what you are going to say.
- Try writing an outline.
Prioritize your writing

- When you plan your writing, don't be overly concerned about language. Concentrate on what you are going to say.

- Don't put too much effort into proofreading until you are sure that what you want to write is the best you can come up with.

- Once the content is sufficiently expressed, you can work on grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and so forth.
More Tips on How to Write a Good Literature Review

Write and rewrite

- More experienced writers rewrite more often and more substantially than less experienced writers.
- Good writing takes time. The better a writer you become, the more you will see that your first thoughts, ideas, and language can be improved.
- Give yourself time to rewrite so that your readers see the best of your thoughts and writing, not the best you could come up with at the last moment.
More Tips on How to Write a Good Literature Review

Find readers

- Ask people to read what you've written. Ask friends, professors, and capable colleagues for feedback.
- Don't expect your writing to be perfect, but strive for perfection.
- Give people drafts and let them know what sort of feedback you want (e.g., comments on organization, ideas, language, or the technical aspects of what you've written).
What to Include in the References Section

- ONLY the sources that have been cited (e.g., direct quotations, paraphrasing) in the dissertation
Sample Chapter 2 Outline

- Dissertation title: *Student-Advisor Interaction in Undergraduate Online Degree Programs: A Factor in Student Retention*
- Chapter 2: Literature Review
  - History of Distance Education
  - History of Academic Advising
  - Factors That Contribute to Online Student Retention
  - Interaction in Education
  - Theoretical Framework—Student/Advisor Interaction
  - The Academic Advising Needs of Students in Online Degree Programs
  - Student/Advisor Interaction—Implications for Research and Practice
  - Gaps in Literature – Student/Advisor Interaction in Online Degree Programs
  - Research Questions
Avoiding Plagiarism: Rule of Thumb

“If you write something that leads your professor to ask ‘Who said that? or ‘Where did that come from?’ it needs to be cited.”

FSE Program Professor
Should I cite?

Is it a quote?

Use quotation marks and cite it

Is it a paraphrase?

Cite it

Is it another’s idea/theory?

Cite it

There is no need to cite if it’s common knowledge or your own thoughts
“Learning how to use sources is one of the most important things you will learn in college. By using sources well and by clearly indicating your debts to these sources, your writing gains authority, clarity, and precision . . . . So long as you are scrupulous about indicating material you have quoted and immediate borrowings you’ve made in paraphrases, you will not be suspected or guilty of plagiarism.”

Resources


http://library.ucsc.edu/help/howto/write-a-literature-review

http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/ReviewofLiterature.html

http://www.sportsci.org/jour/9901/wghreview.html