



Literature Review

Researching, Analyzing, Synthesizing, and Discussing Literature

Defining Literature

- What is “literature”?
- The scholarly writings on a topic
 - journal articles, books, conference proceedings, reports, dissertations, primary sources
- The continuously evolving group of works that interact with each other (like a discussion) on a topic
- Seminal sources
 - original and influential sources on a focus of study



What is a Literature Review?



“Reviewing the literature involves **locating, analyzing, synthesizing,** and **organizing** previous research and documents related to your study area” (Roberts, 2010, p. 86).

Literature Review

- A review of the literature can answer the following questions:
 - What are the key sources?
 - What are the major issues and debates?
 - What is the origin and definition of the topic?
 - How is knowledge on the topic structured and analyzed?
 - What are the main questions and problems addressed to date?
 - What are the key theories, concepts, and ideas?
 - What are the political standpoints involved?

How have the approaches to these questions increased understanding and knowledge of the topic?

Literature Reviews in Different Genres

- Projects that may require a literature review:
 - Course assignment
 - Research paper or proposal
 - Capstone project
 - Thesis or dissertation
 - Scholarly journal article
 - Writing a job report or proposal



Context and Purpose

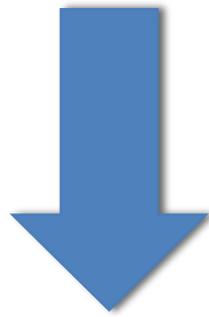
- What is your assignment asking you to do?
 - A review as an introduction to a research paper or article
 - A review as a stand alone course assignment
 - A review as a complete article for others to reference
 - A review as a part of a dissertation or thesis

Part of the Process

- Why do we need a literature review?
 - What purpose does it serve in the research process?
- A literature reviews helps the researcher to:
 - Understand the topic
 - Historical background
 - Previous research
 - Key scholars and/or theorists
 - Significance of key issues
 - Focus the purpose of his/her research and develop ideas
 - Demonstrate knowledge of the research topic

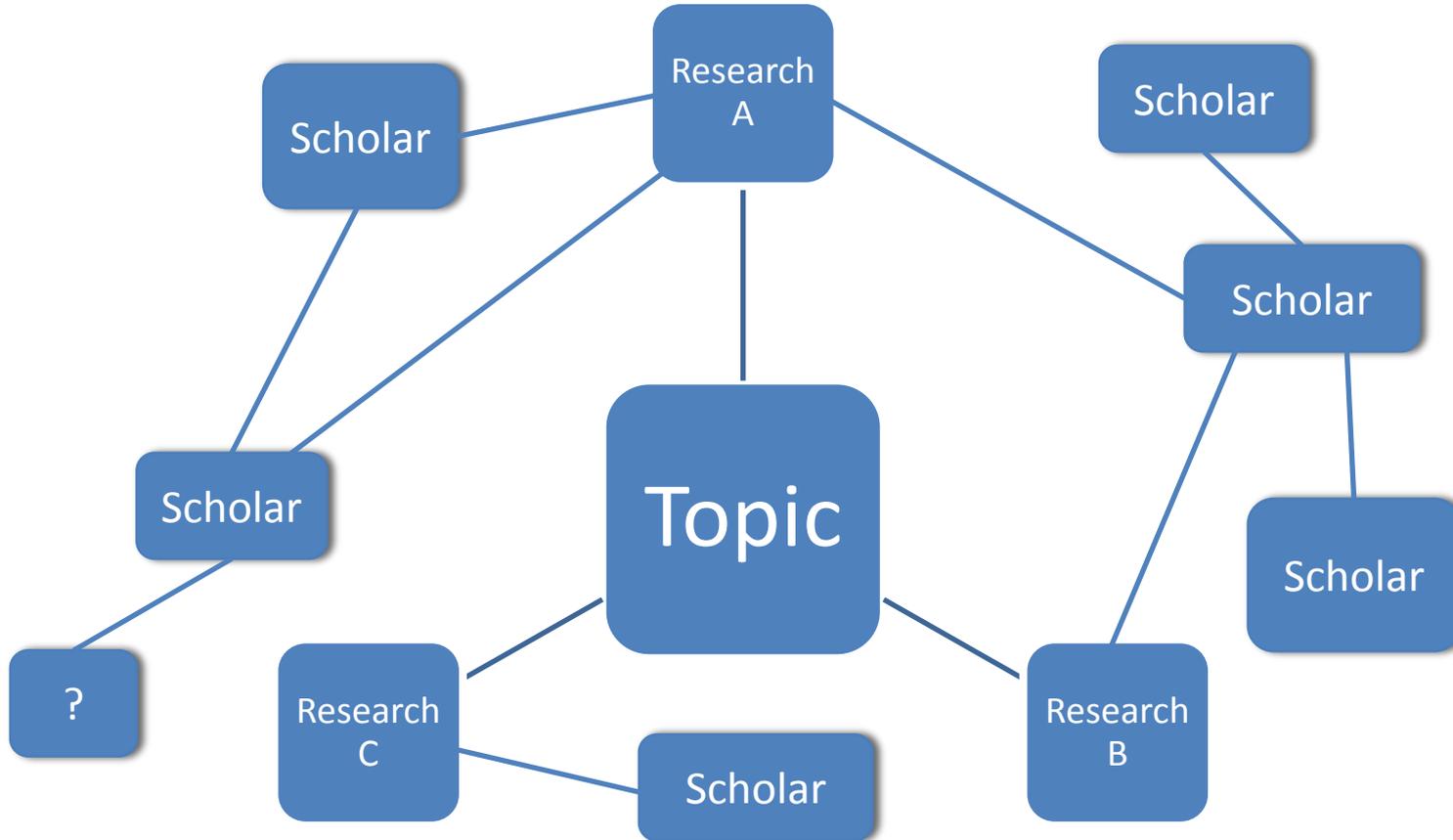
Discussion

- A network of articles on your topic – a conversation.



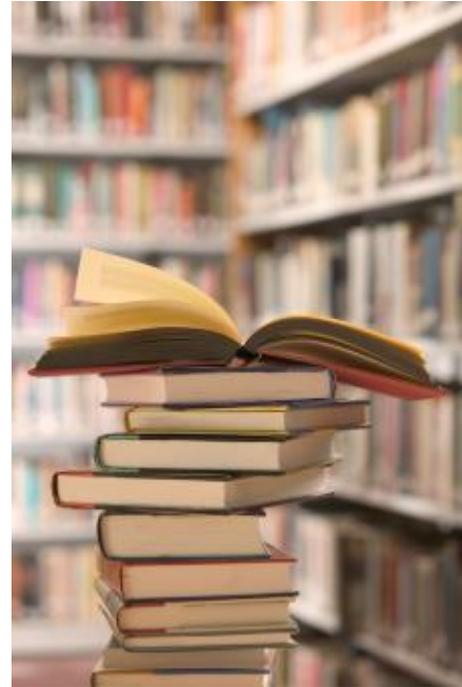
- The literature review can help you find loose ends in the discussion, understand what is going on, and help you find your place in the discussion.

Discussion



Steps for Reviewing the Literature

1. Locating literature (sources)
2. Analyzing
3. Synthesizing
4. Organizing
5. Drafting

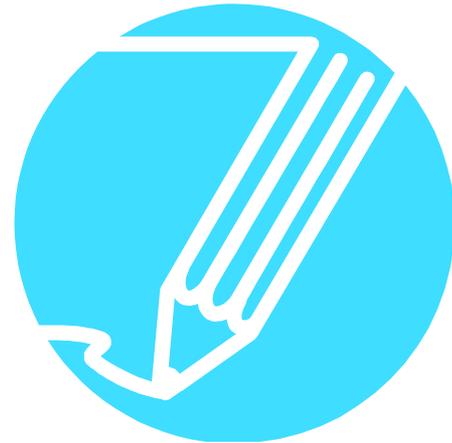


Locating Literature (Sources)

- Create a detailed and specific research question to guide your research.
- Identify key terms, phrases, and descriptors to use when searching for sources.
 - Use an index, thesaurus, or subject headings guide to help refine your search terms.
 - These are specific to discipline and database.
- Search for sources through the library, university databases, and online.
 - Consider related keywords.
 - If you find a relevant source, look at its references for additional sources you can research.
- Evaluate sources for credibility.

Analyzing the Literature

- Read sources and take notes.
- Include publication information so you can cite the source correctly and return to it as needed.
- Consider major themes, issues, commonalities, and differences.
- Continue searching for more sources to fill in gaps or questions.



Synthesizing Sources

- 2 to combine different ideas, styles, or systems into a single idea or system

The final chapter attempts to synthesize the arguments.

T Synonyms and related words

To combine things, or to combine well: *curate, combine, complement, match up, harmonize, go with, piece together, blend, consolidate...*

- How will you discuss the literature you have read and analyzed?
- How can it be grouped/organized?
- Do you have sources that say similar things?
 - Different things?
 - Conflicting things?

Synthesizing

“Synthesizing involves comparing, contrasting, and merging disparate pieces of information into one coherent whole” (Roberts, 2010, p. 100).

Methods for Synthesizing Sources:

- Research Matrix – take note of which sources discuss which major themes, arguments, or main ideas
- Literature or Concept Map – use diagramming software to create a visual to show relationships or patterns among concepts

(Ingram, Hussey, Tigani, & Hemmelgarn, 2012)

Research Matrix

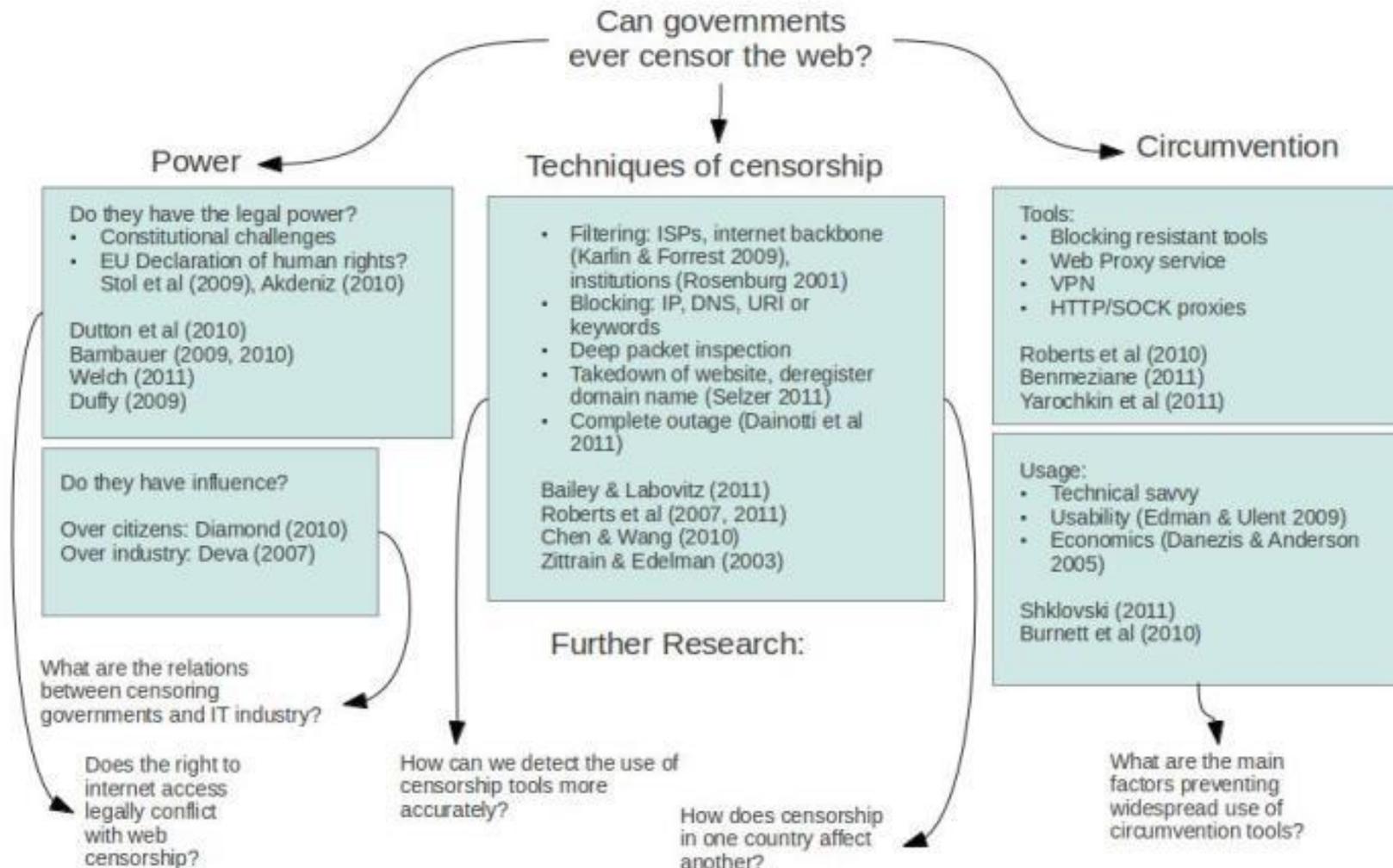
<i>Include research question here.</i>	Author 1	Author 2	Author 3	Author 4
Common theme 1	Include major points, summaries, or quotations in each block—be sure to cite!			
Common theme 2				
Common theme 3				
Common theme 4				

- Look for patterns of information – which major themes, arguments, or main ideas are discussed and by which sources?
- These patterns can be useful in organizing your literature review and composing a focused thesis statement.

Research Matrix

<i>How will sea-level rise impact coastal communities?</i>	Javoy and King (2014)	Ruggles (2011)	Gonzalez, Hart, and Gerren (2012)	“Global Impact” report (2014)
Climate change define, models, impact				
Sea-level rise models				
Sea-level rise impact				
Potential solutions short-term long-term				

Literature or Concept Map



A Literature Review is **not**:

- A list of summaries
 - Intro →
 - Article 1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5 →
 - Summary/ Conclusion
- An annotated bibliography
 - Summary of individual sources with no connection or discussion between them

Organizing a Literature Review

- A literature review should be organized around **ideas**, not the sources themselves.
- What themes or issues connect your sources together?

A literature review requires synthesis and thoughtful organization of sources to create an informative overview of the research.

Tips for Organizing

- Create an outline.
 - List the main topics you will discuss in your paper in the order you believe they should be presented.
 - Include sub-points or sub-topics that are part of main topics.
- From an outline, you can sort your sources under their appropriate headings.
 - **Note:** *Some sources will be used in multiple sections of your paper because they discuss different aspects of your topic.*
- Use headings and sub-headings to set off sections of your paper.

Sample Organization

- Topic: Effects of sea-level rise on coastal communities
 - Climate change
 - Define
 - Models
 - Impact
 - Sea-level rise
 - Models
 - Impact
 - Potential solutions
 - Short-term
 - Long-term

Drafting

- Create a working thesis statement to guide your writing.
 - A thesis statement for a literature review will not necessarily argue for a position or opinion; rather, it will argue for a particular perspective on the material.
 - What are the major themes, issues, or trends that your literature review will discuss?
- Begin drafting the section you feel most comfortable discussing.
- Emphasize relatedness between sources – similarity and difference.

Several studies have found... (Brown, 2007; Jones, 2008; Smith 2006).

Contrary to these studies is the work of Smith and Jones (1998), who found...

Drafting

- Start each paragraph with the point you wish to make.
- Support this point with evidence – studies and examples from the literature you have collected on the topic.
- Be selective in your discussion and include only material that is directly related to your research focus.
- Summarize and synthesize source material.
- Use quotes sparingly.
- Use caution when paraphrasing.
- Cite all source material.

Verbs to Discuss Literature

- Defines
- Describes
- Emphasizes
- Explains
- Observes
- States
- Argues
- Asserts
- Contends
- Demonstrates
- Maintains
- Contradicts
- Criticizes
- Objects
- Opposes
- Refutes
- Adds
- Implies
- Proposes
- Suggests
- Concludes
- Claims

References

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