

What is literature?

- Scholarly writings on a topic (journal articles, books, conference proceedings, dissertations, primary sources)
- A continuously evolving group of works that interact with each other on a topic
- Formative sources – original and influential sources on a focus of study

What is a literature review?

A literature review offers an informative overview of current research on a particular topic. Its purpose is to objectively discuss major scholars and key issues. A literature review can function as an independent document or as a section of a larger work.

Why do we need literature reviews?

A literature review helps the researcher to:

- Understand the topic
- Focus the purpose of their research and develop ideas
- Demonstrate knowledge of the research topic and sources

Steps for Reviewing the Literature (Roberts, 2010)

1. Locate literature (sources)
 - a. Create a detailed and specific research question to guide your research.
 - b. Identify key terms, phrases, and descriptors to use when searching for sources.
 - c. Search for sources through the library, university databases, and online.
 - d. Evaluate sources for credibility.
2. Analyze the literature
 - a. Read sources and take notes.
 - b. Include publication information to cite sources correctly.
 - c. Consider major themes, issues, commonalities, and differences.
 - d. Continue searching for more sources to fill in gaps or questions.
3. Synthesize
 - a. Research Matrix
 - b. Literature Map
 - c. Concept Map
4. Organize
 - a. Chronological
 - b. Thematic
 - c. Methodological
 - d. General to specific
5. Draft
 - a. Use headings and sub-headings to organize sections of the paper.
 - b. Emphasize relatedness between sources – similarities and differences.
 - c. Be selective in the discussions of sources and only include material that is directly related to the research focus.

Reference:

Roberts, C. (2010). *The Dissertation Journey*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. Print.

Write your own future!