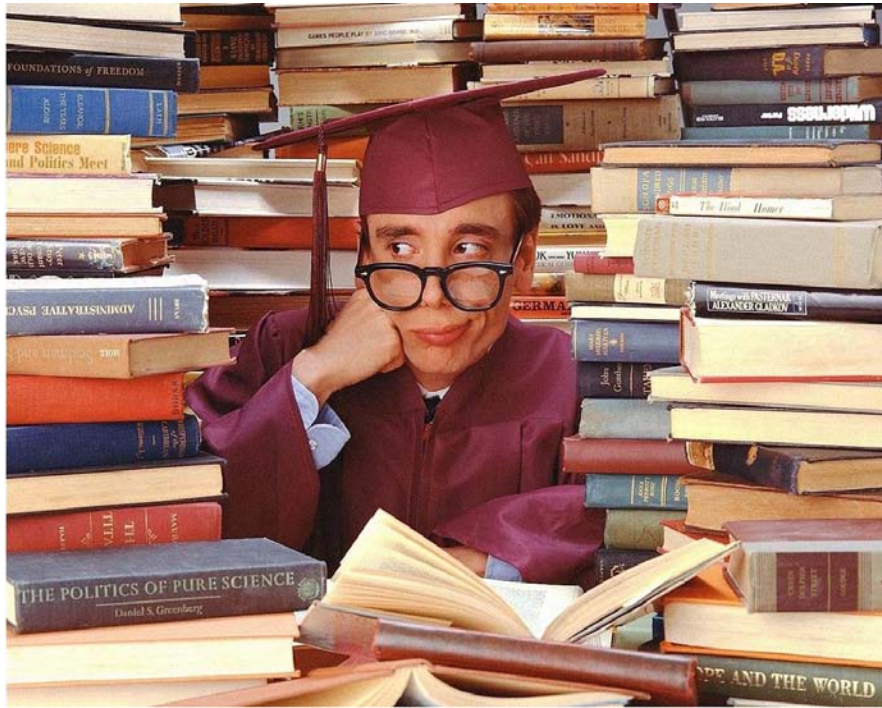


What is a Literature Review?



A literature review is a synthesis of what has been published on a specific topic by accredited scholars and researchers. Writing the literature review enables you to convey to your reader the knowledge, data, ideas, and theories that have already been established regarding the topic. The literature review allows you to articulate the strengths and weaknesses of the studies and the theories arising from those studies. As a written work, your literature review must be defined by a guiding concept, such as your research objective, the problem or issue you discuss, or your argumentative thesis. For the purposes of this course, your guiding concept will be your chosen problem or issue.

Why is it important to conduct a Review of Literature?

The literature review is not meant to be a descriptive list of available material or a mere set of summaries. Writing a literature review will help you acquire a broad base of issue-specific knowledge and understanding, which will likely provide you with several different perspectives on your issue. A detailed examination of these different perspectives may assist you in framing the questions of who, what, where, and why as it pertains to your issue. You may even uncover solutions that you are considering that have already been implemented. In this case, you can

review the effectiveness of the implemented solution. Additionally, you may discover suggestions in the literature that may apply to your situation.

By conducting a thorough literature review, you are essentially arming yourself with the shared knowledge and experience of your colleagues. In the age of lifelong learning, the ability to identify professional resources that will expand knowledge is vital. Besides enlarging your knowledge about the topic, the literature review allows you to gain and demonstrate skills in two areas:

1. Information seeking: the ability to scan the literature efficiently, using manual or computerized methods, in order to identify a set of useful articles and books.
2. Critical appraisal: the ability to apply principles of analysis in order to identify unbiased and valid studies.

A literature review must:

- Be organized around, and related directly to, the thesis or research question you are developing
- Synthesize results into a summary of what is known and what is not
- Identify areas of controversy in the literature
- Formulate questions that need further research

References

The above information is adapted from the University of Toronto's Writing Center. You are encouraged to visit their website, located at <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/litrev.html>, as it provides additional practical tips and suggestions for completing your literature review.