

Resources - Library web sites

1. How to do a literature review web site: libguides.library.kent.edu/litreview
2. Zotero, EndNote, Mendeley web site: libguides.library.kent.edu/managerelibrarysearch
3. Systematic review workshop web Site: libguides.library.kent.edu/SRgettingstarted

What is a Literature Review ?

General Considerations

- A literature review is usually a **process that gathers information on a topic** from numerous information sources related to that topic. The majority if not all of that information is found in "published works".
- Often that process **results in a written product** about that topic, and that product is disseminated or shared with others.
- **Know your "end product"**. Literature reviews can introduce (or be sections of) larger projects. Literature reviews can also be stand-alone end products. So, your finished document can be an introduction, paper, chapter, article, etc.
- **Find examples** of what you will end up with. See examples on web site 1. above.
- **Document your process**, results, ideas, the changes you make, and what your reasons are for your process, steps, changes, etc. More about this under "Managing the Review" on web site 1. above.
- The **general steps** below **look sequential**. However, it is **often an iterative process**. That is, you may "circle back to redo or modify earlier steps". You may also be working on a number of "steps" at the same time.

General Steps

- **State your research topic** (or question); or, make a first attempt to get the process going.
- **Clarify what the review is for**. For example, is it for "background", or a "pro and con discussion", "integration", "summarizing", etc. You may have several purposes.
- **Develop a starting 'search plan'**. What strategies are you going to use to find information?
- **Do your search** and choose sources that *seem* to have information on your topic.
- **Choose the exact information you want to use**, to discuss, or to develop in your review.
- **Write drafts** of 'the paper'...the review. You work with the information you selected to develop the 'review' (e.g., summarize, synthesize, etc.). And you cite the sources used.

How to do a literature review – Workflow

Fall 2019 Paul Fehrman, pfehrman@kent.edu - University Libraries - Kent State University

General categories and workflow for activities and recording

You may have notebook sections like the following for comments, etc. related to your review project. These may also be separate "files" or "folders" in a "filing system" (again, paper or electronic). Notes may be kept online in Google Docs or software programs such as Evernote.

The process of doing a literature review can involve you in all of the following activities. Also you may redo or update work in earlier "steps" of this workflow below. Changes can be or will be made as the projects proceed. Be sure to record your thoughts, choices, reasoning, and results.

1. **Background and Planning.** Initial information, thoughts, and plans/timeline for completing. Also ideas concerning changes to plans.
2. **Research topic/questions.** Initial, updated and final drafts of your topic.
3. **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria.** (IE Criteria) What are you looking for that will lead you to choose the sources that might have information you need. The criteria also indicate what information sources you will not choose to use (exclude). Also, you might list what will guide your selection of actual content/information eventually used/incorporated into your review.
4. **Scoping or Ad hoc searches & results.** Initial "reconnaissance" for initial mapping of an area or for periodic update/checking, etc. It is possible to adjust your IE criteria.
5. **Full Search.** Design/Search results/ Use of results/Search modification, etc.
6. **Extraction.** What information you need and in fact are choosing to pull out of sources to use.
7. **Analysis or Synthesis.** Ideas, sketches, thinking in response to the information you have identified in the information sources.
8. **Browsing.** Information activities that are "not systematic", online, or in the "library stacks", etc.
9. **"Extra" Ideas.** These don't fit elsewhere in notebook, thoughts that are kind of serendipitous. etc.
10. **ILL.** "Interlibrary Loan" or actions taken to get items from outside of KSU or Ohio, and results.
11. **Email/communication.**
12. **Writing drafts of your review.**