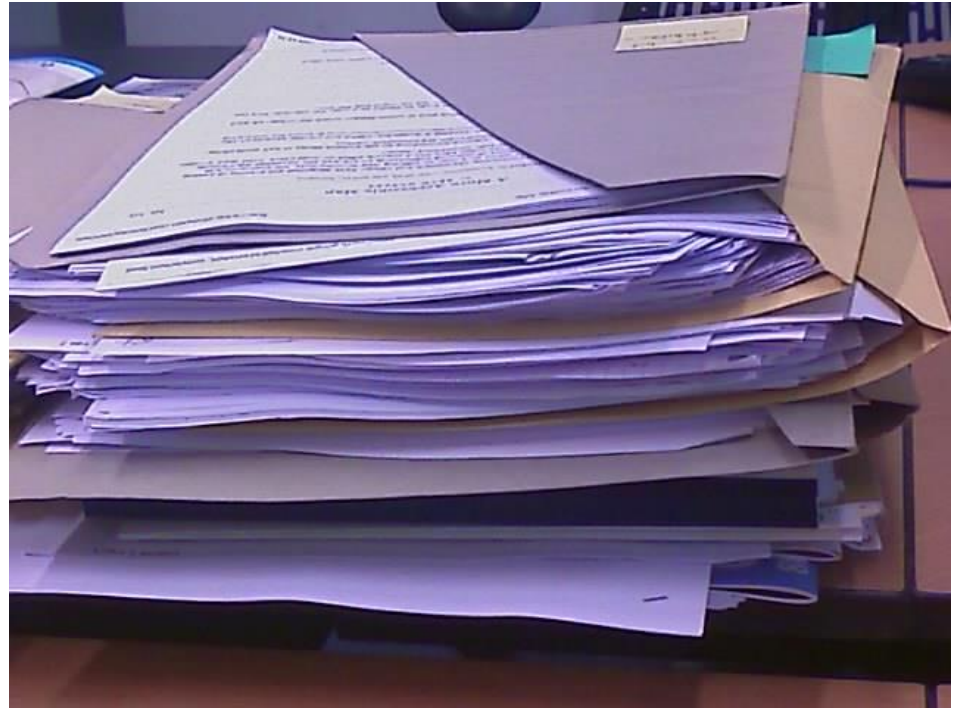




TAMING THE OCTOPUS

Research and
the Literature
Review





Objectives

- Understand the key elements of a good literature review
- Formulate a literature review plan
- Search systematically
- Use critical appraisal skills to evaluate, summarise & synthesise literature
- Tell your research story



What is a Literature Review?

It is :

- A critical evaluation
- A synthesis of available research
- Broad & deep / clear & concise
- Rigorous and consistent in its approach





What is a Literature Review?

It is not:

- A list or annotated bibliography
- An essay
- A simple summary of the literature or paraphrasing of works
- Confined to description
- Narrow & shallow





Literature Review Concerns

- Getting full text online / paper is not online / no access to journal
- Missing crucial papers
- How do I know when to stop looking for information?
- How to select what to read first?
- Which articles are important / significant?
- Finding the most respected papers
- Checking for “top rating” research in the field
- What order should I read the literature in ?
- Organising my reading – by theme / topic?
- Distinguishing what is essential reading from what is not
- Reading methods - beginning to end?





Where do I find the literature?

- Google Scholar
- Academic databases
- Library catalogues
- Theses/dissertations
- Government
- Specialist sources eg patents, standards
- Social Media
- Professional networks





How do I plan a literature review?

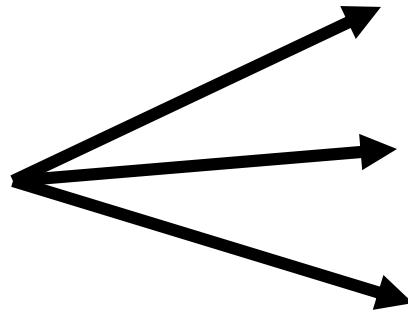
Prepare & decide on:

- A search plan
- Sources to search
- Inclusion /exclusion criteria
- Time for the search
- Critical appraisal plan
- Initial review writing plan
- Talk to your subject librarian!



Search Plan

Google
Scholar



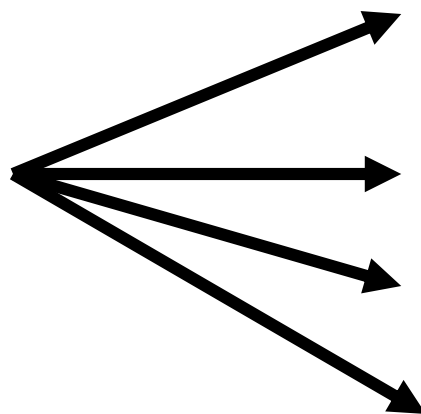
“Quick and dirty”

Keyword /key phrase identification

Recent authors in the field

Prepare systematic search plan

Academic
Databases



Systematic search

Prioritise databases – see your

Libguide / consult subject librarian

Build & save search strategy

Review & export selected results to
reference manager

Example : Search plan - “Use and effectiveness of online peer feedback in UK higher education”

	Concept 1	AND →	Concept 2	AND →	Concept 3
Main concept	Peer feedback		Online learning /teaching		Higher education
	OR ↓		OR ↓		OR ↓
List search terms using truncation* and wildcards?	Peer feedback		Online Elearn* or e-learn* Educational technology Web-based or web based Internet Blended learn* Mobile learn*		Universit*
	OR ↓		OR ↓		OR ↓
List synonyms, alternate spelling, language, etc.	Peer assess* Self regulated learn* Reflective learn*				
	OR ↓		↓		OR ↓
List words derived from database subject headings / thesaurus	Formative tests (British Education Index)		Distance education Distance learning Computer assisted instruction Computer assisted testing (British Education Index)		Higher education (British Education Index)

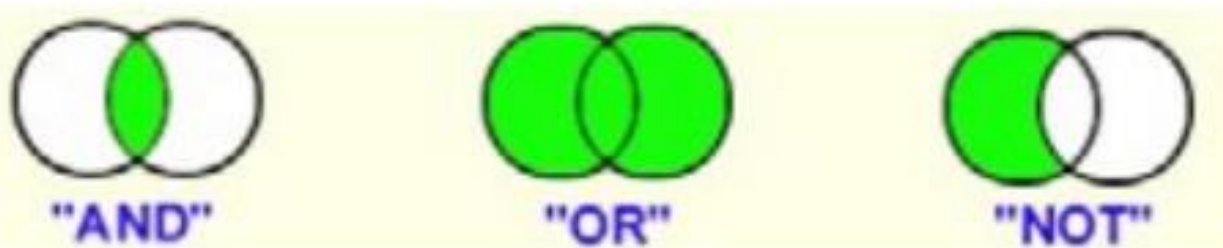


Databases & Boolean Logic

AND includes all the search terms

OR includes at least one of the search terms

NOT excludes the search term from the result



Sample search of *British Education Index* for the topic – “Use and Effectiveness of online peer feedback in UK higher education”

1	DE "FORMATIVE tests"	81
2	peer feedback or peer assess*	145
3	reflective learn*	2,737
4	S1 OR S2 or S3	3,274
5	DE "DISTANCE education" or distance learn*	2,503
6	DE "COMPUTER assisted testing (Education)" or DE "COMPUTER assisted instruction"	6,506
7	online or elearn* or e-learn*	4,663
8	DE "EDUCATIONAL technology"	2,837
9	S6 OR S7 OR S8	13,122
10	S4 AND S9	265
11	higher education or universit*	79,210
12	S10 AND S11	210

Search Results

Too many?



Too few or irrelevant?

Limiters- date, language, methodology etc

Field Searching – which part of the record to look in

Subject Searching – database controlled, sets the context

Search Terms – just wrong?

Phrase Searching – overuse?

Spelling – mistakes ?

Abbreviations – non specific

Boolean Logic – wrong use of “and/or”

Concepts - too many combined

Limiters - overuse



Organising references

- Managing your references – worth the learning curve!

Tools can:

- Organize / store references
- “Write & cite” in the required house style
- Share & collaborate with other researchers.





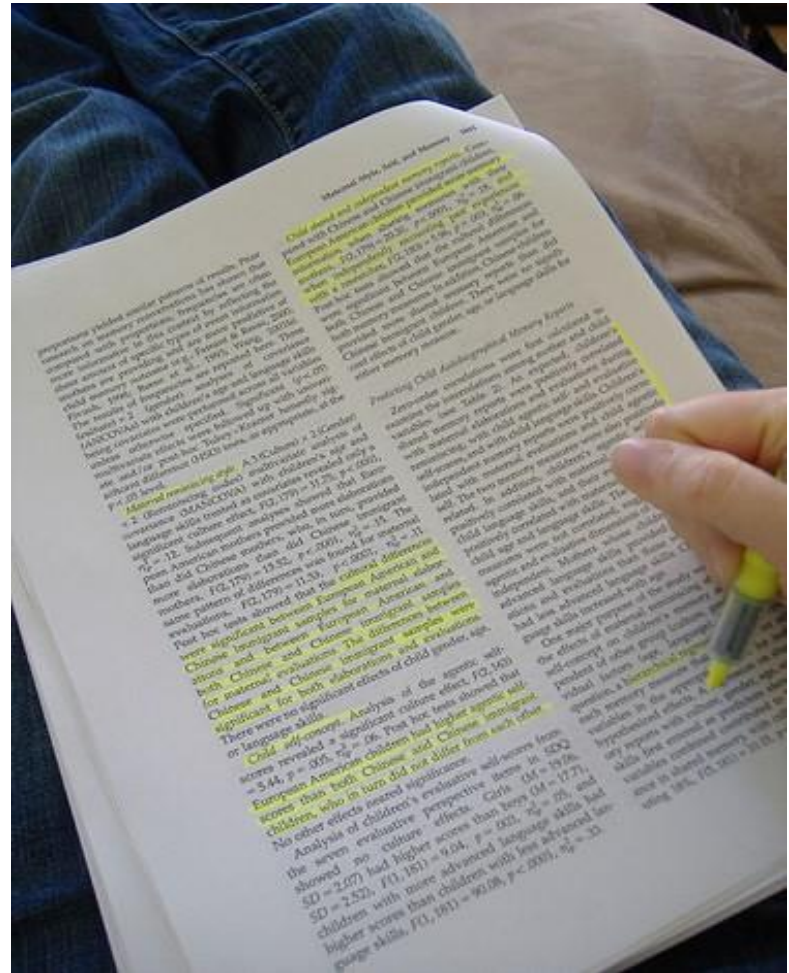
What To Read/Evaluate First....

- Any recent *review* papers ?
- Recent papers from good quality journals?
- Apply your inclusion/exclusion search criteria to choosing papers
- Check paper importance – run the title through Google Scholar – how many citations does it have ?



How to Read a Journal Article

- Scan & skim
- Consider your own view
- What do you already know about the topic and the methods used
- Evaluate as you read
- Consider tables for recording data extraction, coding, thematic analysis and synthesis

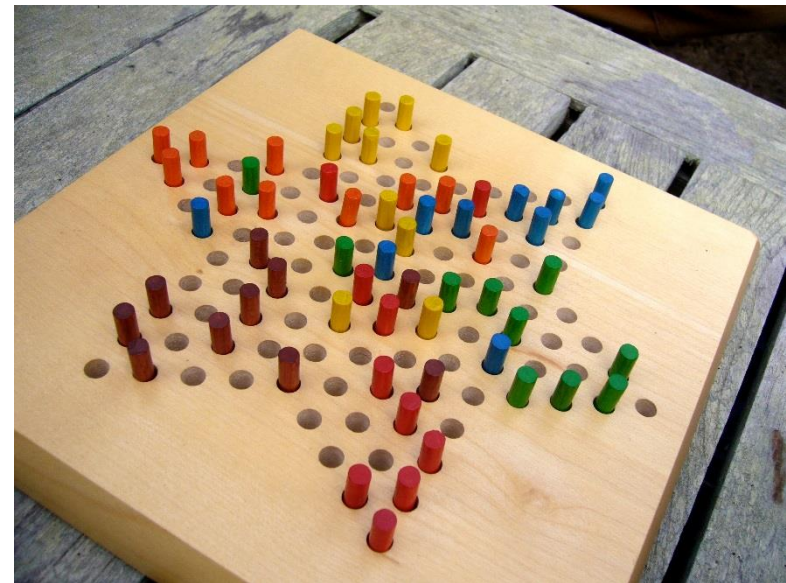




How to Evaluate a Journal Article

As you read different papers, look for:

- Themes
- Common ground
- Differences
- Controversy
- Gaps
- Dot joining
- More literature





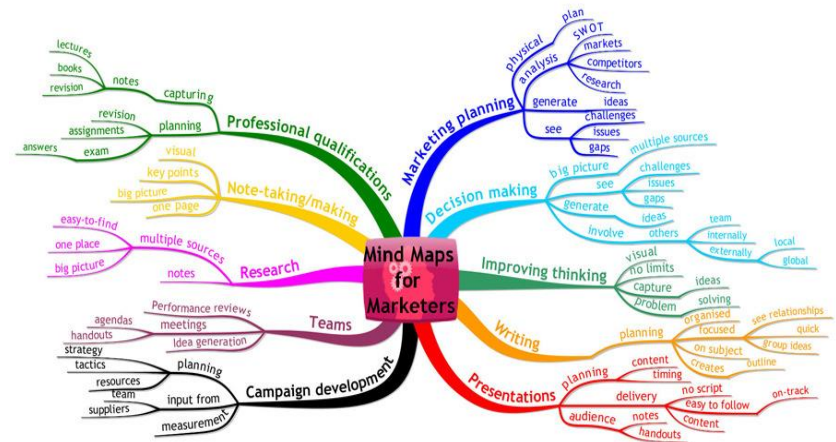
Writing

- Review scope - what you are going to cover
- Research field – scope
- Establish a position (point of view) from which you are reviewing the literature
- Where is the gap?



Writing

- Tell your research story using the literature
- Organise the review into sections – use themes, methodology, frameworks



To Do List.....

Selection of literature

- Clear inclusion / exclusion of your research stated
- Focused on recent developments / research for that topic

Writing

- Logical flow. Follows the intellectual progression & major debates in the field
- Demonstrates wide, but focused reading
- Concentrates on current / most relevant issues

Interpretation

- Is the interpretation /evaluation of your reading obvious?
- Use the literature to give your own interpretation of the research?
- Identified the gap in the research / literature?

Common Literature Review Issues

- Trying to read everything
- Not evaluating
- Including every source
- Not writing & relating sources to your topic or view
- Ineffective organisation when writing
- Incomplete referencing



Conclusions

- Allocate time to the task
- Start early - iterative process, not foundational
- Keep track of references
- Read effectively
- Interpret, synthesise & identify gaps in the literature
- Keep up to date
- Share review with a critical friend



Further information

www.howtodoaliteraturereview.com

<http://www.literaturereviewhq.com>

Wisker, G. (2015). Developing doctoral authors: engaging with theoretical perspectives through the literature review. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 52(1), 64-74. doi: 10.1080/14703297.2014.981841



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