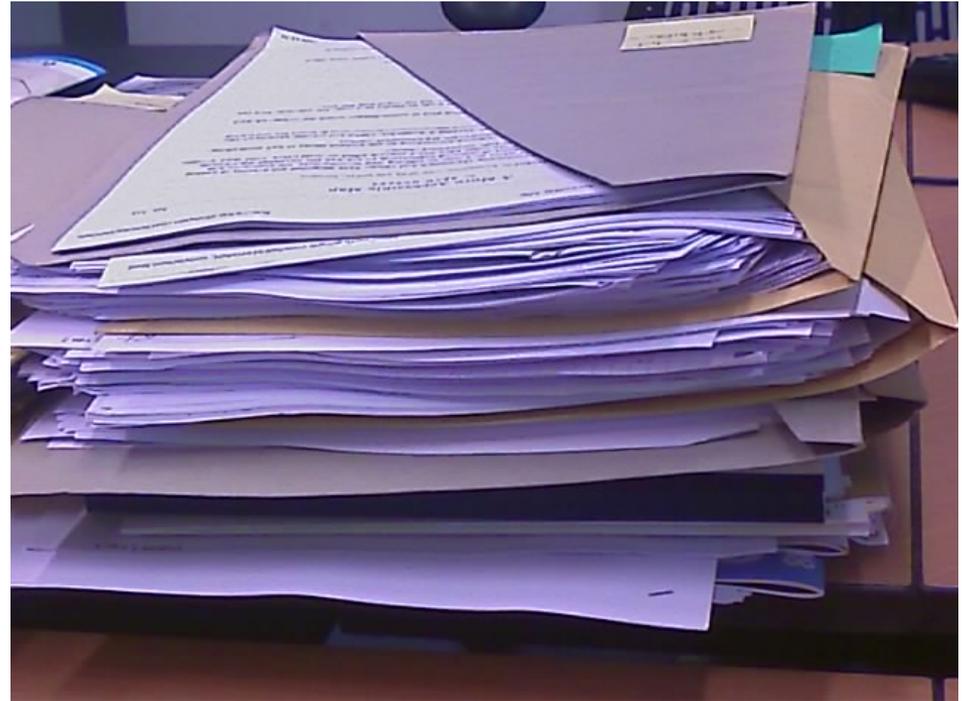# TAMING THE OCTOPUS

Research, Literature Searching and Reviewing

Objectives

- Understand the key elements of a good literature search & review

- Formulate a literature search & 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

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Literature Search/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
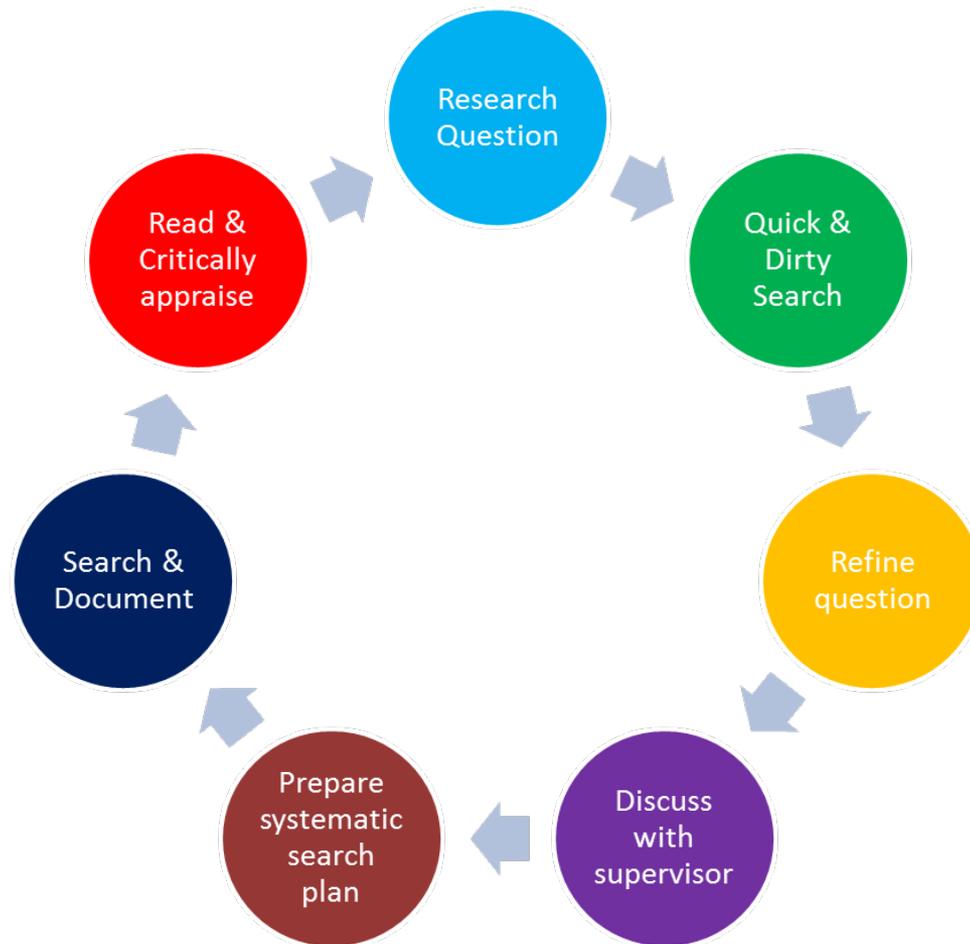- Reading methods - beginning to end?
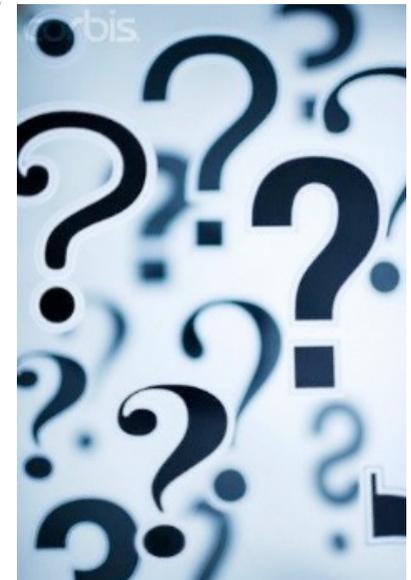
Where do I find the literature?

- Google Scholar
- Academic databases
- Library catalogues
- Theses/dissertations
- Government policy
- Specialist sources eg patents, standards
- "Grey literature"
- Social Media
- Professional networks
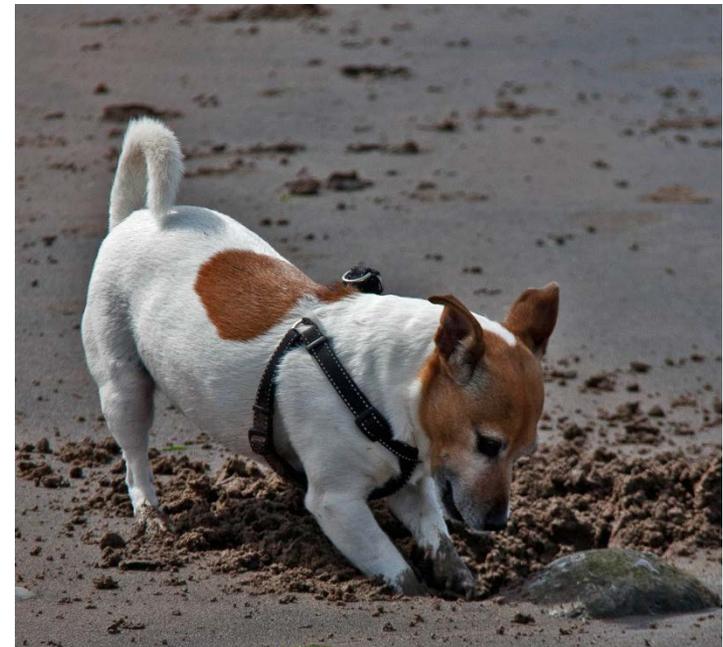
Literature Reviewing : Plan and Search

How do I plan a literature search / 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!

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Google & Google Scholar

Good for:

- "Quick and dirty", non systematic searching.

- Getting a feel for the language /key search terms in your field.

- Identifying key authors in your field.

- Locating "free" copies of articles, research reports, unpublished material, teaching materials.

Google

Google Scholar

Not good for:

- Comprehensive, systematic, structured searching.

- Accessing materials from all publishers –they are not all there !

- Finding needles in haystacks…..

Literature Search : Sources

LibrarySearch
http://librarysearch.napier.ac.uk

Literature Search : Sources

LibGuides
http://libguides.napier.ac.uk

Key Academic Databases For Your Subject

Consult your subject Librarian's LibGuide

Get a full A-Z list of Academic Databases on LibrarySearch

Top Evidence Sources

LibrarySearch (library catalogue)

Google Scholar

CINAHL

Medline

Pubmed

PsycInfo

ASSIA

Cochrane Library

SIGN

LibrarySearch

NEW SEARCH   DATABASES   JOURNAL SEARCH   BROWZINE   READING LISTS   BROWSE

Search anything
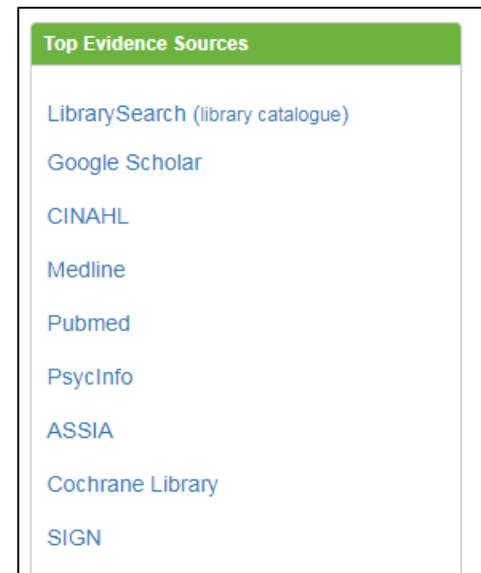
Academic Databases & Boolean Logic

AND   includes all the search terms

OR   includes at least one of the search terms

NOT   excludes the search term from the result

"AND"   "OR"   "NOT"

https://youtu.be/4qKDQKJCp-s

Search Results

Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY
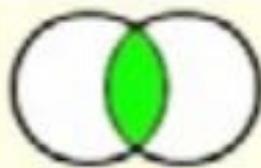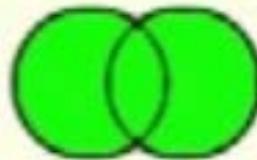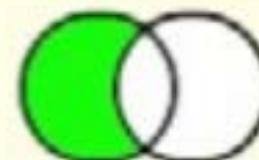
Too many?

Limiters- date, language, methodology etc

Field Searching – which part of the record to look in

Subject Searching – database controlled, sets the context

_____

Too few or irrelevant?

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

Obtaining Full Text

- LibrarySearch

- Database link outs

- Google Scholar -   free copies

- Professional networks   /
  bodies

- <u>Inter Library loan</u> – access to
  British Library

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
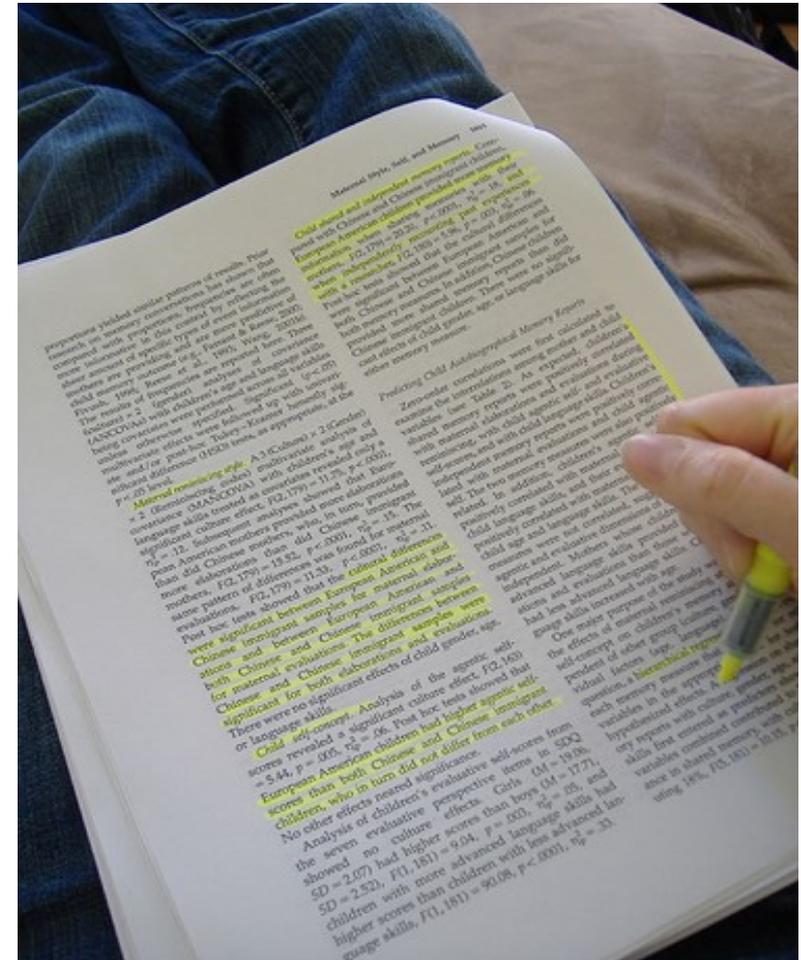
How to Evaluate a Journal Article

As you read different papers, look for:

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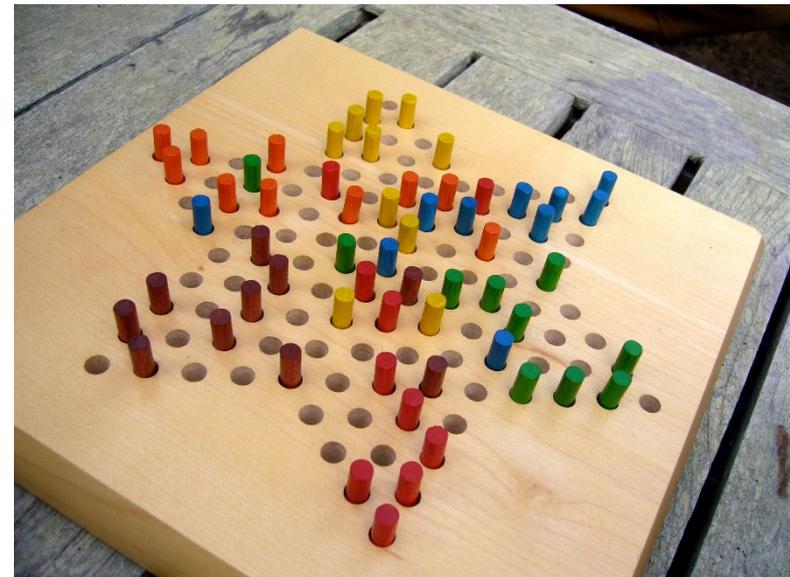
Writing

- 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

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https://thesiswhisperer.com/2015/05/13/how-to-become-a-literature-searching-ninja/

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Libguides.napier.ac.uk/litrev

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