

# **Introduction to the Literature Review**

**Padraig Kirby BA (Hons); HdipLIS; MSc (LIS)**

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTMsfDDvioY>

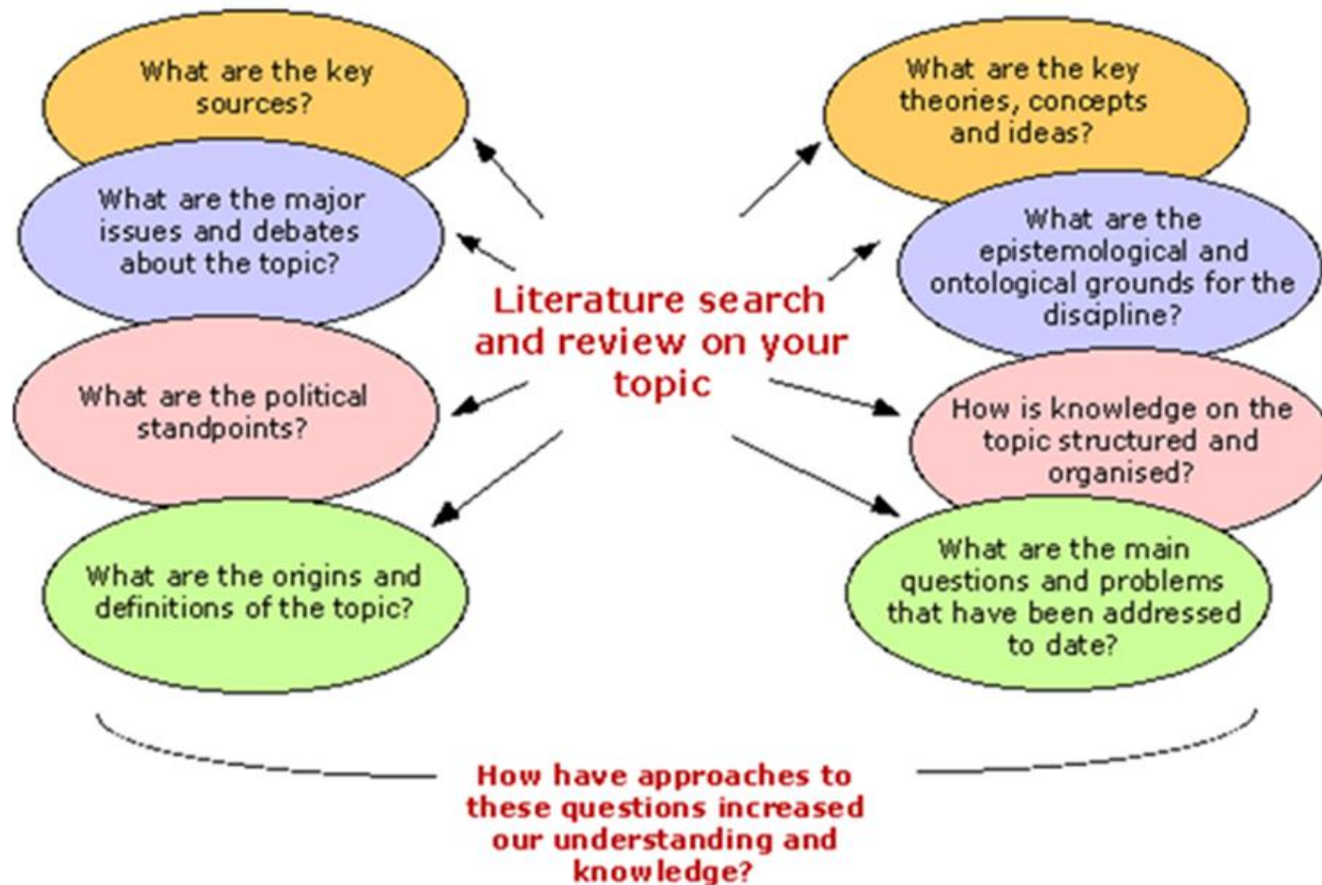
Apple pie theme

*The literature review is a **professional conversation** framed by a guiding concept, a well-organised presentation of the current state of topic knowledge, designed to highlight past research findings and to pave the way for the current research.*

Switzer, A. & Wynn Perdue, S. (2011)



Some of the questions a literature review can answer are highlighted in the following diagram:



Adapted from Hart, C. (1998 p 14)

The literature review forms the foundation of the project. It is the chapter in your thesis or dissertation where you will describe and discuss:

- what research has already been done related to your topic
- how this research has helped inform your own topic
- how your topic fits into the bigger picture of research in your discipline.

Western Libraries (2014)

## **A 'good' literature review**

- ..... is a synthesis of available research
- ..... is a critical evaluation
- ..... has appropriate breadth & depth
- ..... has clarity and conciseness
- ..... uses rigorous and consistent methods

## **A 'poor' literature review**

- ..... is an annotated bibliography
- ..... is confined to description
- ..... is narrow and shallow
- ..... is confusing and longwinded
- ..... is constructed in an arbitrary way

# Groupwork



# The Sheep in Wolf's Clothing

adapted from a story by James Thurber

Not very long ago there was a very clever sheep who all the other sheep looked up to. In the name of research, he put on wolf's clothing and went among the wolves as a spy, to see what was going on.

He arrived on a fete day, when all the wolves were singing in the taverns or dancing in the street. He came to the conclusion that wolves are just like sheep, for they gambol and frisk. Every day is a fete day in Wolfland.

He sought out papers for his literature review that agreed with his theory. His final thesis gave the following message to his fellows: wolves are just like sheep, for they gambol and frisk, and every day is a fete day in Wolfland.

The citizens of Sheepland were convinced by all this, so they drew in their sentinels and they let down their barriers. When the wolves descended on them one night, howling and slaving, the sheep were as easy to kill as flies on a windowpane.....

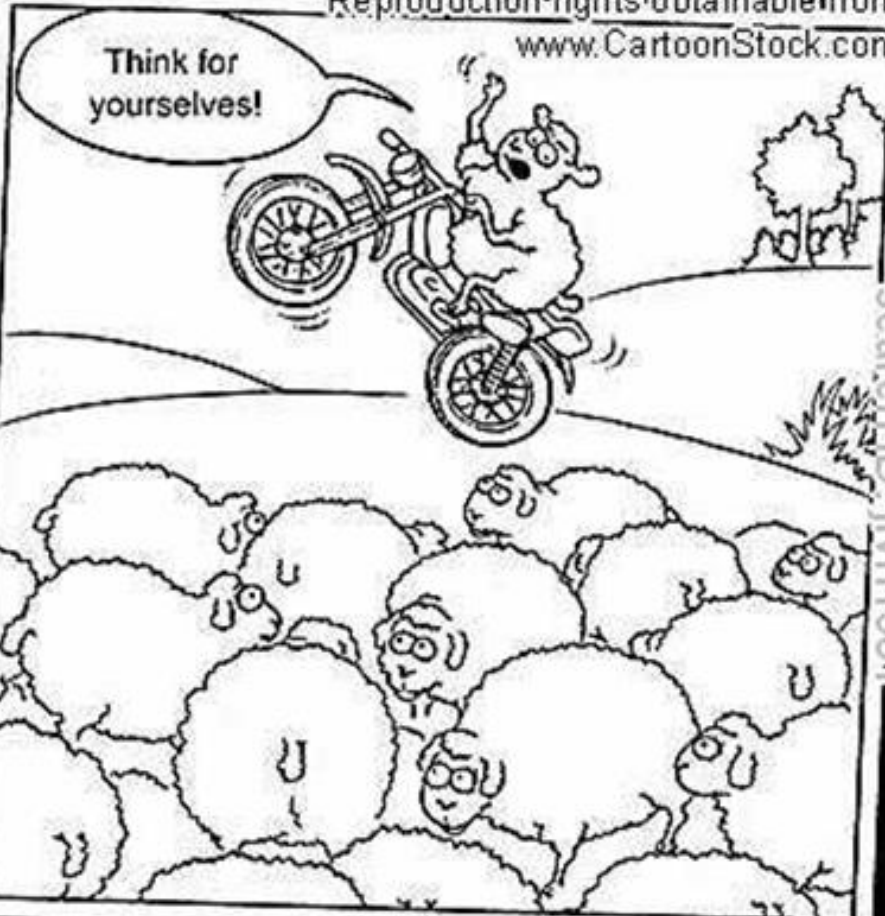


# Moral of story

- Literature reviews take time - no shortcuts
- You can't rely on a single source
- You have to read the literature with a critical and discerning eye in preparation for high-level independent research
- You have to take a neutral stance regardless of your own inherent beliefs or bias
- Don't follow the sheep!

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I started going to school with Mary and loved it so much I kept on going and ended up with a PhD...

# Getting started...

Creswell (2002,86) recommends a five step process:

1. identifying terms to typically use in your literature search
  - Make a list of search terms or keywords for searching
  - Look at synonyms and keep adding additional and alternative terms to your list
  - Turn your research topic into a question or series of questions

# Step 2

## 2. locating the literature

- Library databases: peer-reviewed papers – scholarly research
- Scholarly web resources
- Grey literature – conference papers, government publications etc
- Inter library loans
- Visit other libraries

*(Note: Contact us if you need some help with this step!)*



## Literature searching: what kind of information do I need to use?

Library Catalogue  
Books (including e-books)  
Encyclopedias  
Journals  
Electronic Databases  
Dissertations and theses  
Newspapers  
Statistics  
Web Resources

# Step 3

## 3. reading and checking the relevance of the literature

- Authority – who are the authors/publishers?
- Accuracy – is the information accurate?
- Bias – check for hidden agendas
- Currency – is the material up to date?
- Coverage – are all aspects of the topic covered?

# Step 4a

4. organizing the literature you have selected - provides a **framework** for analysing, comparing, critiquing and synthesising the results of a study with other studies.

Source citation	Source summary	Theme / Talking point 1	Theme / Talking point 2	Theme / Talking point 3
Reference A	Paper outlines...	Direct quote		Direct quote
Reference B	Paper reviews...	Paraphrase	Paraphrase	
Reference C	Paper outlines...			Paraphrase
Reference D	Paper argues...		Direct quote	Paraphrase



- This grid provides a framework for comparing and contrasting different authors' views on an issue.
- It is a way of grouping authors who draw similar conclusions and of noting areas in which authors are in disagreement.
- It will help you to start structuring your literature review in terms of themes.

# Step 5

- writing a literature review

*You can rewrite, you can revise, you can refine, but the first thing you have to do is write.....Long discussions over dinner, reading yet another piece of research, having yet another discussion over drinks.....none of this counts as writing....*

Barreca, G. (2011)

- Remember to follow appropriate **referencing** conventions throughout

# Last word

*Write for those who will be reading you in 10 years time, not for those who wrote about your topic 10 years ago....keep in mind that, eventually, the readers who will be most interested in your work are those who will be looking up to you as the expert in the field.*

Barreca, G. (2011)





Literature searching: defining your topic.

Your research project/essay will be easier if you take time to plan and analyse your topic before you start searching.



- **Think about your topic**
- Read your question (if you have been set one) or think about your area of research. Clarify any unknown or unfamiliar terms :
- use [dictionaries](#) for definitions
- use [glossaries](#) for specialised terms
- use [encyclopedias](#) for an overview



- **Identify the main concepts or elements of your topic**
- use single words or key phrases
- use related words :
  - use broader and narrower terms
  - use [synonyms](#)
  - use a [thesaurus](#) to find synonyms and related terms
- make a list of relevant keywords (the words that best describe what you want to look for)



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Example: The impact of computers and the internet on learning in higher education

This can be broken down into the following concepts or elements:

- computers
- internet
- learning
- higher education

From these concepts the following list of keywords can be identified:

- computers, information technology
- internet, world wide web, www
- learning, acquiring knowledge
- higher education, university, college



## Literature searching: what kind of information do I need to use?

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**Title** The sports management toolkit / Paul Emery.  
**Publisher** Abingdon, Oxon [U.K.] ; New York : Routledge, 2011.

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**Descript** xv, 254 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.  
**Bibliog.** Includes bibliographical references and index.  
**Summary** 'The Sports Management Toolkit' is a practical guide to the most important management tools and techniques available to those working in the sport and leisure industries. Each chapter includes a detailed, step-by-step description of the key tools and techniques and their application.  
**Subject** [Sports -- Management -- Handbooks, manuals, etc.](#)  
[Sports administration -- Handbooks, manuals, etc.](#)  
**Alt Author** [Emery, Paul.](#)  
**ISBN** 0415491592 (pbk)  
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E-Book

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Title **Sports management and administration [electronic resource] / David C. Watt.**  
Publisher **London ; New York : E & FN Spon, 1998.**

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Descript **viii, 255 p. : ill.**  
Bibliog. **Includes bibliographical references (p. [247]-253) and index.**  
Reproduction **Electronic reproduction. Palo Alto, Calif. : ebrary, 2008. Available via World Wide Web. Access may be limited to ebrary affiliated libraries.**  
Subject **Sports -- Great Britain -- Management.  
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DAVID C. WATT

Sports Management and Administration  
Watt, David C.  
Pages: 268  
Publisher: Routledge



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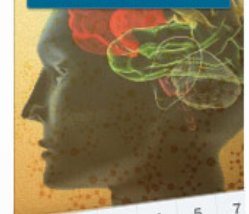
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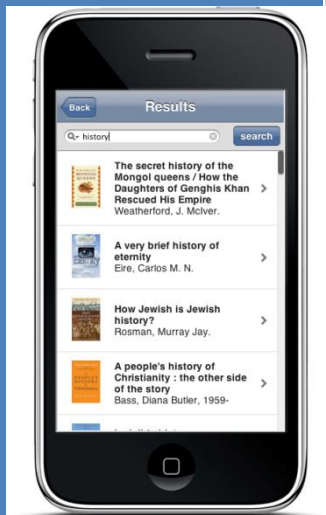
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