Hints for conducting literature reviews

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What is the most important part of a paper, dissertation, PhD thesis?
Agenda

1. Top 10 questions by students related to literature review writing

2. Plenary Q&A
FAQ # 10

What is a literature review?
What is a literature review?

• A **critical, evaluative** summary
  – Of **relevant** articles
  – On a **specific topic** or several very closely related topics
  – Using a **systematic approach**
FAQ # 09

Why do I need to conduct a literature review?
Why a literature review?

• To identify gaps in the literature
• To avoid reinventing the wheel (at the very least this will save time and it can stop you from making the same mistakes as others)
• To carry on from where others have already reached (reviewing the field allows you to build on the platform of existing knowledge and ideas)
• To identify other people working in the same fields (a researcher network is a valuable resource)
• To increase your breadth of knowledge of your subject area

Why a literature review?

- To identify seminal works in your area
- To provide the intellectual context for your own work, enabling you to position your project relative to other work
- To identify opposing views
- To put your work into perspective
- To demonstrate that you can access previous work in an area
- To identify information and ideas that may be relevant to your project
- To identify methods that could be relevant to your project

Why a literature review?

• Part of your research design, e.g. triangulation!
FAQ # 08

Are all literature reviews the same or are there different types?
Types of literature reviews

- Classification based on:
  - Focus
  - Goal
  - Coverage
  - Audience
  - Perspective
Types of literature reviews

• **FOCUS**
  • Research outcomes
  • Research methods
  • Theories
  • Practices

• **GOAL**
  • Integration
    • *Generalization*
    • *Conflict resolution*
    • *Linguistic bridge-building*
  • Criticism
  • Identification of central issues

Types of literature reviews

- **COVERAGE**
  - Exhaustive
  - Exhaustive with selective citation
  - Representative
  - Central / pivotal

- **AUDIENCE**
  - Specialized scholars
  - General scholars
  - Practioners or Policymakers
  - General Public

- **PERSPECTIVE**
  - Neutral representation
  - Espousal of position

FAQ # 07

Where/How should I start? & Should I read more books or papers?
Starting off right...

- What is the **purpose/problem** of your study?
- What is the **research question**?
- Which **areas of research** are you addressing?
- What is the **major contribution** you expect from your study?

- Preferences in **research design**?
Articles vs. books

• **Books**
  - Conceptual and/or broad
  - Major theories
  - The ‘classics’
  - Provide very good summaries

• **Articles**
  - Tend to be rather empirical
  - Include research methods
  - Latest developments in the field
  - Find and **existing literature review**!
FAQ # 06

How to search for articles and books?
Finding articles: A matter of proper keywords/language

- You can **NEVER** have too many keywords to start with
- Choose commonly used technical terms
- Look at keywords provided in articles to identify important terms
- ‘review’, etc. as an additional keyword to look for specific types of papers
Finding articles: A matter of proper keywords/language

- **AND / +**: inclusive, finds papers/books which include all words connected via AND

- **AND NOT / NOT / -**: finds papers/books with the first keywords, but not with the second word

- **OR**: finds papers/books including the first or second keyword

- **“…”**: exact phrase

- *** or ? (wildcards)**:
  - wom*n → woman + women
  - organi*ation* → organisation, organization, organisational, organizational, etc.
Search engines

- **EBSO, ProQuest, PsychInfo, etc.**
  - Specialized databases
  - Very good search functions available

- **Google Scholar** ([scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com))
  - Searches across different databases
  - Less detailed search functions available
  - Links to university library
  - Includes articles, books, conference papers (everything that can be found online!) → be cautious regarding quality!

- **Harzing’s Publish or Perish (PoP)** ([www.harzing.com/pop](http://www.harzing.com/pop))
  - Uses Google Scholar
  - Relatively good search functions available
  - Automatically provides ranking of articles based on citation

- **Google Books** ([books.google.com](http://books.google.com))
Examples & demo

• **EBSCO, Google Scholar:**
  – Keywords:
    • Personality
    • Patterns of communication
    • Interactional sociolinguistics

• **Google Books:**
  – Keyword: Conversation Analysis
FAQ # 05

There are too many articles. Which one should I prioritize?
What is relevance?

- **Citations:**
  - Frequently cited papers more discussed than others in the field, thus, have greater impact
  - Downside:
    - Older publications tend to have more citations than recently published papers → risk of using outdated knowledge!
What is relevance?

- **Impact factor:**
  - Used for journals
  - E.g. h-index; using Harzing’s Publish or Perish (PoP)
    - Harzing’s Journal Quality List (934 journals!):
      [http://www.harzing.com/jql.htm](http://www.harzing.com/jql.htm)
    - H-index of 86 for a journal indicates that
      - 86 articles in the journal
      - Have been cited at least 86 times
      - And all other articles in the journal have been cited 86 times or less
FAQ # 04

There are not many articles! How can I find more relevant ones?
Searching backward and forward in time

Reference 1
Reference 2
Reference 3
Reference 4
Reference n...

Article
Cited by 1
Cited by 2
Cited by 3
Cited by 4
Cited by n...

PAST
Reference to papers
< 2005

Published
2005

Cited by papers
> 2005

FUTURE
Example & demo

• Google Scholar:
  – Keywords:
    • Intercultural communication
    • Critical incident
Practical hints...

• Change keywords

• Reduce the number of keywords

• Look for research in other disciplines using similar approaches or even the same theory

• Search for articles by authors
  – Who are the leading scholars in the field?
FAQ # 03

How should I read and analyze an article for a literature review?
Screening vs. reading articles
Coding articles

• Attach codes/labels to articles to meaningfully sort them:
  – Type of publication (conceptual, empirical, etc.)
  – Theories used
  – Variables & constructs investigated
  – Methods applied
  – FINDINGS
Examples of codes

- Title of paper
- Year published
- Authors
- Name of Journal

- H-index of journal
- Cites/paper

- Keywords of paper

- Type of paper:
  - Conceptual
  - Empirical
    - Qualitative methods
    - Quantitative methods
    - Mixed methods
  - Literature review
  - Meta-analysis

- Level of analysis:
  - Globe
  - Region
  - Country
  - Organization
  - Groups, teams
  - Individual

- Variables used
  - Dependent variable
  - Independent variable
  - Moderators / Mediators
  - Control variables

- Concepts and theories used

- Findings
  - Grouping similar results
  - Grouping similar papers
FAQ # 02

How to structure and write my literature review?
Table 2: Final sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Title of journal</th>
<th>h-index</th>
<th># of papers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen &amp; Strat</td>
<td>Strategic Management Journal</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gen &amp; Strat</td>
<td>Academy of Management Journal</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>Gen &amp; Strat</td>
<td>Journal of Management</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>OS/OB,HRM,IR</td>
<td>Organization Science</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gen &amp; Strat</td>
<td>Journal of International Business Studies</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen &amp; Strat</td>
<td>Sloan Management Review</td>
<td>109</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Journal of Management Studies</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen &amp; Strat</td>
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<td>83</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>OS/OB,HRM,IR</td>
<td>Journal of Business Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>OS/OB,HRM,IR</td>
<td>Leadership Quarterly</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>Journal of Applied Behavioral Science</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>European Management Journal</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen &amp; Strat</td>
<td>British Journal of Management</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen &amp; Strat</td>
<td>Business Horizons</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUM</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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ONE way of doing it...

List of codes (e.g. in Excel)

Theories

Methods

Findings
Figure 3: Most frequently used methods to measure integration (in %)

INTEGRATION
(Sample = 68 papers)

- meta-analysis: 2%
- literature review: 2%
- empirical - mixed methods: 9%
- empirical - qualitative: 36%
- empirical - quantitative: 29%
- conceptual: 14%
Let others speak for you

• ‘While lack of strategic fit is often blamed as being a major reason for unsuccessful deals, the notion of cultural fit has gained in importance in recent years.’

Let others speak for you

• ‘While lack of strategic fit is often blamed as being a major reason for unsuccessful deals, the notion of ‘cultural fit’ has gained in importance in recent years (e.g. Cartwright and Cooper, 1993; Chatterjee et al., 1992; Child et al.; 2001; Datta, 1991; Fink and Holden, 2007; Hurt and Hurt, 2005; Larsson and Lubatkin, 2001; Olie, 1994; Teerikangas and Very, 2006; Weber, 1996; Weber, et al., 1996; etc.)’

Let others speak for you

• ‘In particular, many scholars argue that cultural fit during the post-M&A phase is even more important than strategic fit (Cartwright and Cooper, 1993; Chatterjee et al., 1992; Weber, 1996; Weber, et al., 1996).’

Let others speak for you

• ‘While some scholars argue that cultural differences cause M&As to fail (e.g. Barkema et al. 1996; Harris, & Ravenscraft, 1991; Krishnan et al., 1997; Morisini et al., 1998; Weber & Pliskin, 1996; etc.), other studies suggest the opposite (e.g. Chatterjee et al., 1992; Datta, 1991; Datta & Puia, 1995; Harrison et al., 2001; Larsson & Finkelstein, 1999; Very et al., 1997; etc.).

FAQ # 01

How many articles or books do I need to read in order to write a good literature review?
Final remark

• Research is about **making decisions on a sound, rigor, comprehensible, logic and traceable basis:**
  – Research question,
  – Context,
  – Methodology,
  – Sampling,
  – Analysis,
  – Theory, etc.