CS405: WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW

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NOV 2015
WHAT IS IT & WHAT DOES IT DO?

• Shows you know about your topic

• Demonstrates your skills in
  • locating key resources
  • critically appraising them

• Puts your work in context & justifies it
  • What has/hasn’t been done
  • Key debates & perspectives
  • Identifies gap
FORMAT & STRUCTURE

Good:

- Thematic: synthesize into themes/patterns
- Analysis: critical evaluation
- Focused: directly relates to your topic/question

Bad:

- Sequential: annotated bibliography or list
- Description: summary
- Vague: on your general topic
PROCESS & STEPS

1. Topic/research question
2. Literature search
3. Analytical reading
4. Synthesis & themes
5. Organization
6. Writing
TOPIC/RESEARCH QUESTION

• Choose & focus your topic
• Create a research question
• Affects entire research project
• Can’t do lit review before question
LITERATURE SEARCH

• Search systematically
• Construct a search strategy
• Decide where to search
• Repeat your strategies across databases
• Note results and modify strategies
SEARCH TERMS

• Experiment
• Find commonly used terms & variations

  cultural workers OR artists
    AND
  labor OR labour OR working conditions OR employment relations OR unions OR organizing OR precarity OR neoliberalism
There’s nothing on my topic

Working conditions for women in the video game industry

Your topic/question
HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

• Depends on your topic
• Include the key people/studies
• Works cited/bibliographies
• Stop when you keep seeing the same references
TRACK YOUR SOURCES

• Keep track as you go along
• Saves lots of time later
• Use a citation management/research organization tool
MENDELEY: RESEARCH ORGANIZATION TOOL
ANALYTICAL READING

Read strategically:

• How does this relate to my topic/question?
• How does it relate to other studies?
• How is it useful?
• What are the main findings, arguments, etc?
• What is the theory & framework?
• What are the strengths & weaknesses?

Keep notes
SYNTHESIS & ANALYSIS

Group into themes, patterns
Code or annotate

Think about:

• Most significant findings, themes
• What areas have researchers focused on (or not)?
• What theories/methods are used?
• Changes/developments over time?
SYNTHESIS STRATEGIES

• Note cards or sticky notes
• Searchable notes (e.g. Mendeley)
  • Use controlled vocabulary
• Synthesis matrix
• Concept map
## SYNTHESIS MATRIX

**Example: Education reform**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Source 1</th>
<th>Source 2</th>
<th>Source 3</th>
<th>Source 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme A</td>
<td>&quot;Schools cannot be reformed without reforming the community.&quot; (p. 35)</td>
<td>Students do not care about their neighborhoods as much as they care about quality teaching. (p. 39)</td>
<td>&quot;Without ensuring that their most basic needs are taken care of in the home, a student cannot succeed while in school.&quot; (p. 2)</td>
<td>While out-of-school factors may play a role in a child’s academic achievement, it ultimately depends on a parent’s involvement. (p. 45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of standardized testing</td>
<td>Standardized testing only serves to harm students in the long run. (p. 40-42)</td>
<td>Standardized testing holds teachers to high standards. (p. 12-29)</td>
<td>Standardized testing is inherently discriminatory and harmful. (p. 6)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCEPT MAP

Where does Interactive Media belong?

- **Interaction**
  - has different levels of
  - is an
  - is daily performed by
  - Action
  - helps to update
  - between
  - Non-Digital media
  - Digital media

- **Interactivity**
  - allows higher

- **New media**
  - characterizes
  - have low updates
  - have high updates
  - into

- **Digital technology**
  - is a base for

- **Innovation adoption stages**
  - have
  - Innovators
  - Early Adopters
  - Early Majority
  - Late majority
  - Laggards

- **Individuals**
  - can be
  - interconnected
  - Media objects
  - have
  - Digital immigrants
  - Digital natives

- **Bits**
  - keep information in
  - grew up with
ORGANIZE & WRITE

• Structured around research question
• Provides rationale for your study
• How do you build on/depart from existing work?

Purpose: situate/justify your work
TYPICAL ORGANIZATION

• Intro
  • Introduce your topic/question & mention main trends

• Body
  • Thematic discussion related to your question: what there is & where the gaps are
  • Individual studies if important

• Conclusion
  • Summarize most important points
  • Connect to your research explicitly, show gap
QUESTIONS?

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