

ACADEMIC SKILLS REVIEW

Session IV

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Literature search/Literature review

Differs by...

□ Purpose

- To provide the reader with context
- To introduce main topics/perspectives within the field
- To show that you are aware of what is going on

□ Scope

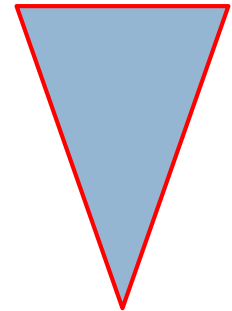
- Longer (thesis): comprehensive search for majority, if not all, relevant authors
- Shorter (essay): key authors, most recent contributions

□ Stage

- Early stage skimming (looking for topics, 'What is going on?')
- More focused on particular area ('Now I'm interested in this...')
- Intensive reading and assessing sources ('Ok, tell me more and let's see if I can use this...')

Literature review - puprose

- Usually as one of the first chapters (in thesis, paper, etc.) or at the beginning of the text (in article), closely following the introduction (or directly in it)
- Main authors/texts should be included first, followed by texts broadening the knowledge
 - Proceed from main (foundational) texts to newer ones
 - From books to articles
 - From broader area to more specific issues
- The reader should be introduced to the topic, know what is going on, if there are gaps in the knowledge...
 - Properly conducted literature review should serve as a purpose statement for the whole paper, proving necessity of the research



Literature review - scope

- Thesis
 - Should be comprehensive and contain majority of foundational literature/key authors
 - Usually as a separate chapter
 - Requires extensive search and awareness
- Essay (shorter pieces in general)
 - key authors
 - recent contributions
 - contributions relevant for the text

Literature review - stage

- Early stages (“I have no idea what is going on...”)
 - Going through texts that fall within the area
 - Using keywords for searching in databases
 - Using filters (temporal, topical, ...)
 - **Reading... (scanning, skimming)**
- More focused on particular area (“Now I’m interested in this...”)
 - You found the subject of your interest and are trying to find more about it
 - Looking for particular authors, sub-topics, searching within specific journals/databases
 - Using more specific keywords
 - Refining through filters (more focused)
 - **Reading (skimming)**
- Intensive reading and assessing sources (“Tell me more and let’s see if I can use it...”)
 - assessing what is relevant
 - ...what is necessary
 - includes fair share of critical thinking (is the source relevant/reliable?)
 - **Reading (thorough)**

Literature search and assessment

- What is known and what is not?
- How solid are the findings?
- Can we build on them?
- Does the literature identify key points and cleavages?
- Where I stand according to other authors/findings?
- Can my opinion be justified?
- Do I need to justify my opinion?

- Don't make premature conclusions.
- Apply critical approach (!)
- Mind the nature of assessed sources (!!)
- Mind authors's background and affiliation (!!!)

Some mixed remarks...

- Avoid biased sources as sources of information (blogs?)
 - Mind the purpose, author, background, sponsor,...
 - Every author is **just** a human being!
- Mind the difference between commonly used sources and sources used in academia
- Mind the difference between primary and secondary sources
 - (X prim. & sec. data)
 - Choose sources with the lowest level of distortion
- Wikipedia! – rather a starting point...
- Verification/triangulation of sources (!)
 - Through various sources
 - Through various methods of data collecting (texts, interviews,...)
 - Through using various types of sources (primary/secondary)

Referencing

- **...is necessary** 😊
- Naturally, no one knows everything therefore we use other people's knowledge. Using it without reference is not ethical
 - Infringement of intellectual property – in fact a **robbery**
- Reader must be able to **differentiate already known findings from new ones (author's inputs)**
- Rephrased a content vs. direct citation
- Referencing = reliability!
- Referencing enables replicability (=reliability)
- Reader must be able **to track and find** the referenced source
- **Most cases of plagiarism are unintentional!**

Referencing

- **ctrl+c, ctrl+c = plagiarism**
- **ctrl+c, ctrl+c, reference = no plagiarism**
- Don't 'over-reference' your text (ok, this is a bit controversial 😊)
 - An academic work should NOT be a compilation of previously released texts
 - Should be original (i. e. worth reading)
- Referenced materials are basis for our own findings

Referencing

- What should be referenced and what need not to be:
 - 1) **Should be:** evidence, data that are not commonly known among the population, among the targeted audience, different views on commonly known facts/events, figures, amounts, theories,...
 - 2) **Need not to be:** Commonly **known facts** (“WWII ended in 1945”) – mind the level of information and targeted audience!
- Reference list – may be divided according to nature of sources (primary/secondary, articles, monographies, interviews,...)
 - **Should be easy to follow and use**

Referencing

- Generally: in text or as footnotes
- Automatic referencing engines: included in MS Office, Zotero,...
- Only sources **used in the actual text** can be referenced!
- In case of interviews or other materials that are hard to include as annex – statement of availability
- Do not translate language of the source
- Only known reference details are used
 - Don't make up things you don't know
- Many different styles of referencing and citations
 - always mind the targeted audience and **rules of the targeted platform/journal**
- **<http://mve.fss.muni.cz/en/masters-degree/study-agenda/citation-style>**

Rephrased content vs. direct citation

- Both should be referenced
- Paraphrase/Rephrased content (i.e. **information ABOUT the content, NOT the same text**) is cited in plain text
 - no quotation marks or italics – only if exact and/or specific words/terms are used
- Direct citation (i.e. **the content itself**) is highlighted/differentiated from the rest of the text (quotation marks, italics)

Thank you for your attention



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