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Researching Your Literature Review

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- What is a literature review?
- Who conducts a literature review?
- Types of review.
- Challenges
- Where to search?
- Building an effective search strategy.

LIBRARY GUIDE TO WRITING A LITERATURE REVIEW



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Writing a Literature Review

This guide will help you get started on your literature review by providing basic information on what a review is, how to write it and where to do the research.

Getting Started

About literature reviews

Why conduct a literature review?

Necessary skills

Literature review: An overview for students

Defining the Scope

Finding the Literature

Developing a Search Strategy

Managing Your Research

Writing the Review

Systematic Reviews and Other Review Types

Useful Books

Useful Videos

Useful Links

Commonly Used Terms

About literature reviews

What is a literature review?

A literature review is an evaluative critique of scholarly literature that has been published on a particular subject. The aim of a literature review is to demonstrate that you have read and understood the main trends and concepts in your chosen discipline taking in any contrasting or opposing views. A comprehensive literature review can identify gaps in the literature and provide direction for future research

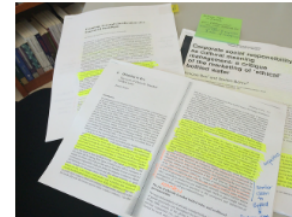


Image Source: "Literature Review" by Raul Pacheco-Vega is licensed under CC BY 2.0

A literature review is not a summary - it analyses, critically evaluates and synthesises to give a clear picture of the current knowledge base of a subject.

Literature reviews can be part of undergraduate and postgraduate work or a standalone project.

Why are you asked to do a literature review?

They are necessary for several reasons. They are an essential part of the research process. They give an overview of a topic's theoretical background. Researchers use literature reviews to identify gaps in existing knowledge and to set the context for their research studies. Students can be asked to complete a literature review as part of their course to help them understand a topic more deeply. Writing a literature review can enable a student to demonstrate what they have learned about a topic and further develop their own insights within that topic .

A literature review shows that

- You have an in-depth grasp of your topic
- You understand where your own research fits into and adds to an existing body of knowledge

It demonstrates

Search

<https://libguides.tcd.ie/literature-reviews>

WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?



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- An evaluative critique of published scholarly literature.
- Identifies gaps in the literature.
- Provides direction for further research.
- Not just a summary.

WHO DOES A LITERATURE REVIEW?



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- **Undergraduates:**

As part of essays, dissertations, theses, or research projects.

- **Postgraduates (Taught and Research):**

To situate their work within existing scholarship, identify gaps, and show how their study contributes to the field.

- **Academics, Professionals and Practitioners:**

In fields like medicine, education, or business, to stay current with best practices and evidence-based approaches.



Literature Review:

- A generic term that can cover a wide range of subjects.
- Varies in comprehensiveness.
- Typically, narrative; analysis may be chronological, conceptual, thematic, or however the author decides to organise the material.



Scoping Review:

- A preliminary assessment of the size and scope of available published literature.
- Intended to identify current research and the extent of such research; determine if a more comprehensive review is viable.
- Can include research in progress, and the completeness of searching is determined by time/scope.



Systematic Review:

- Seeks to systematically search, appraise, and synthesize research evidence.
- Requires exhaustive, comprehensive searching, including searching of grey literature.

LIBRARY GUIDE TO DOING A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW:



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Doing a Systematic Review

A concise guide to the steps involved in systematic, scoping and related reviews

Home

[What is a systematic review?](#)

[How does it differ from a systematic literature search?](#)

[Other types of review](#)

[Systematic reviews summarised](#)

[Find existing systematic reviews](#)

[Other guides to doing systematic reviews](#)

[Subject Librarian](#)

Step 1: Your Research Question, Frameworks and Creating a Protocol

Step 2: Choosing Where to Search

What is a systematic review?

Systematic reviews (SRs) are one of the hardest things you can do academically... **but** one of the most rewarding. They can find actual answers to real-world problems – even if that answer is “we don’t know the answer yet”.

A systematic review should:

- Answer a focused question
- Use a comprehensive, reproducible search strategy
- Identify ALL relevant studies (published and unpublished), unless certain types are specifically excluded
- Evaluate all results for inclusion and quality
- Bring together the findings in an unbiased way and present a balanced summary

To avoid bias, an SR is usually run by at least two researchers, but this may not be possible - if so, it should be noted as a *limitation* of the review. Professional reviews will often involve large teams looking at complex research questions. Such large studies can take months or even years to complete.

Getting help

Your Subject Librarian can give advice on some of the steps in the process, such as choosing where to search (step 2), developing a search strategy (step 3), running & recording your search (step 4) and managing your search results (step 5). Refer to your supervisor for help with developing your protocol, evaluating the studies and writing up the review.

- [Contact your Subject Librarian](#)

<https://libguides.tcd.ie/systematic-reviews>





- Knowing where to start, (e.g. wide then narrow, or narrow then wide?).
- Knowing what to include/exclude.
- Knowing when to stop literature searching.
- Knowing how far to venture into the literature of associated domains.



A Research Question should be:

- Specific
- Focused
- Clearly formulated
- Well defined (no ambiguity)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS - SOME EXAMPLES



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1. Why are social networking sites harmful?
2. What is the effect on the environment from global warming?
3. How are online users experiencing or addressing privacy issues on such social networking sites as Instagram and TikTok?
4. How is glacial melting affecting penguins in Antarctica?

GOOD OR BAD - WHAT DO YOU THINK?



- **Pick one.**
- **Write for 30 seconds.**
- **Talk to another person.**

1. Why are social networking sites harmful?
2. What is the effect on the environment from global warming?
3. How are online users experiencing or addressing privacy issues on such social networking sites as Instagram and TikTok?
4. How is glacial melting affecting penguins in Antarctica?



Why are social networking sites harmful?

- Doesn't specify which social networking sites.
- What kind of harm the sites are causing.
- Assumes that this 'harm' is proven and/or accepted.

Exercise developed by Dr Derek Richards - Systematic Literature Reviews presentation, Student Learning Development, TCD

EXAMPLE 2



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What is the effect on the environment from global warming?
So broad that it couldn't be adequately answered in a book-length piece!

Exercise developed by Dr Derek Richards - Systematic Literature Reviews presentation, Student Learning Development, TCD

EXAMPLE 3



How are online users experiencing or addressing privacy issues on such social networking sites as Instagram and TikTok?

- Specifies sites (Instagram and TikTok).
- Type of harm (privacy issues).
- Who the issue is harming (users).

Exercise developed by Dr Derek Richards - Systematic Literature Reviews presentation, Student Learning Development, TCD

EXAMPLE 4



How is glacial melting affecting penguins in Antarctica?

- Narrows down to a specific cause (glacial melting).
- A specific place (Antarctica).
- A specific group that is affected (penguins).

Exercise developed by Dr Derek Richards - Systematic Literature Reviews presentation, Student Learning Development, TCD

WHERE WILL YOU SEARCH?



- Databases.
- References from articles.
- Grey literature (PhD theses, government/company/organisation websites, conference proceedings etc.).
- Other (e.g. social media).

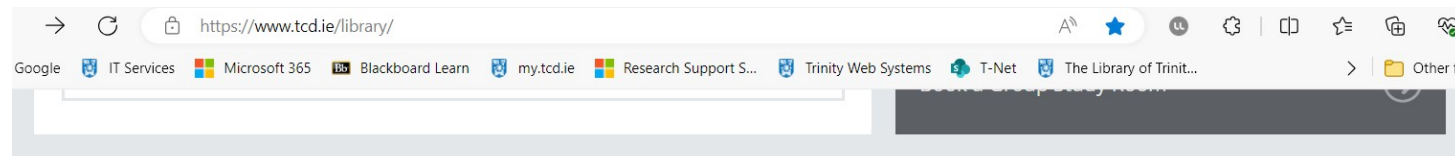
Today we are going to look at databases.



- TCD Library subscribes to 1000+ databases.
- Identify databases relevant to your subject area.
- Your Subject Librarian's webpage is a great place to start.



Check your Subject Librarian's page for databases in your subject area:



- [Admissions](#) →
- [Academic Integrity](#) →
- [Borrowing & Renewing](#) →
- [Databases & E-Books](#) →
- [EndNote](#) →
- [FAQs](#) →
- [MyReadingList@TCD](#) →
- [Off Campus Access](#) →
- [Subject Librarians](#) →
- [Welcome to the Library](#) →

FINDING DATABASES: SUBJECT LIBRARIAN PAGE



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https://libguides.tcd.ie/drama/guide

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Drama & Film

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 - Reference Management
 - Tutorials & Guides

Search books, e-books, articles +

Go

Welcome!



Welcome to the subject page for Drama and Film. Here you will find resources and tips to help you become familiar with all that the Library has to offer. Click through the blue tabs to the left to learn more about the Library including:

- How to find your books
- How to cite your references
- How EndNote can help you manage your references

Explore [Stella Search](#), the Library's catalogue, to discover books, journals and journal articles.

Subject Librarian



Helen Bradley

Email Me

Book a consultation with Helen

Contact:

Ussher Library,
Wednesday to Friday

Subjects:

Classics, Drama &
Film, European

DATABASES: WHAT DO I DO NEXT?



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- Look at your topic.
- Determine the **main concepts**.
- Identify relevant databases.



To search systematically you need to use:

- Controlled vocabulary (where available).
- Your own **keywords** (inc. synonyms and variant spellings).
- Boolean operators (AND, OR).
- Consider phrase searching.



- Sometimes listed under **subject terms, thesaurus** or **descriptors**.
- Retrieves all items indexed under a particular topic
- Some databases have names for their controlled vocabulary (e.g. MeSH).
- Not all databases have controlled vocabulary (e.g. JSTOR and Web of Science).

KEYWORD SEARCHING (YOUR OWN WORDS)

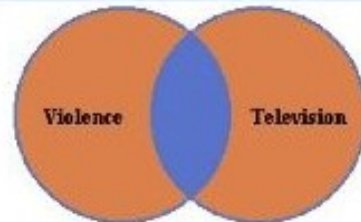


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- Controlled vocabulary can miss out on jargon, slang, newer terms and the very latest articles if subject terms have not yet been assigned.
- Keyword searching (repeating the controlled vocabulary term or natural language) in the **Title/Abstract** field will pick up on jargon, slang, newer terms, etc. Put them in a word document.
- Use a combination of the two (where both options are available).



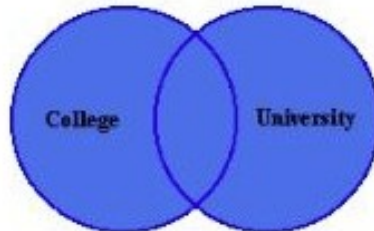
Boolean Searching



violence **AND**
television

AND

is used to **narrow** a search.
This will retrieve records that
have both keywords.



college **OR**
university

OR

is used to **expand** a search.
This will retrieve records that
have either keyword. It's
useful for synonyms.



Use the operator OR to combine synonyms, variant spellings etc.:

back pain OR back ache OR backache.

organisation OR organization.

Truncate your search term:

therap* = therapy; therapies; therapeutic; therapeutics.

Remove some search terms, or use more general terms.

TO NARROW A SEARCH



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Use the operator AND:

back pain AND back ache

Phrase searching; put your phrase in quotation marks:

“back pain” AND “back ache”

RESEARCH QUESTION EXAMPLE



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‘What role does community gardening play in providing food?’

Consider the important keywords (and synonyms).



WHAT DO YOU THINK?



- Suggest terms to search for.
- Write for 30 seconds.
- Talk to another person.

‘What role does community gardening play in providing food?’

POTENTIAL SEARCH TERMS



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"Community garden*"

"Allotment*"

"Food"

"Nutrition"

KEYWORDS (TITLE AND ABSTRACT SEARCH)



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food OR nutrition

"community garden*" OR
allotment*

SEARCH STRATEGY (SUMMARY)



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- Break down your research question into concepts.
- Use controlled vocabulary (if available) and your own keywords to search systematically.
- Avail of the truncation symbol (*) and consider phrase searching (“ ”).
- Use Boolean Operators remembering OR is more and AND is less.
- Start building your search.



- Document the search strategy.
- Record what research was found.
- Manage your references:
EndNote: <https://www.tcd.ie/library/support/endnote/>



- Download **Lean Library** to provide access to digital content purchased by the Library of Trinity College Dublin.
- Install the extension, select *Trinity College Dublin*, and it will automatically detect when you are on a website that contains content the Library subscribes to (e.g. Google Scholar).

<https://www.tcd.ie/library/using-library/off-campus.php>



“What role does community gardening play in providing food?”

Search articles, ebooks & more

Searching: [Academic Search Complete](#) Basic search

DE "Allotment gardens" Title or Abstract - XB

OR DE "Community gardens" Title or Abstract - XB

AND All fields

+ Add row | - Delete row Clear all Search

Filters Search options **Subjects**

community garden

TODAY WE COVERED:

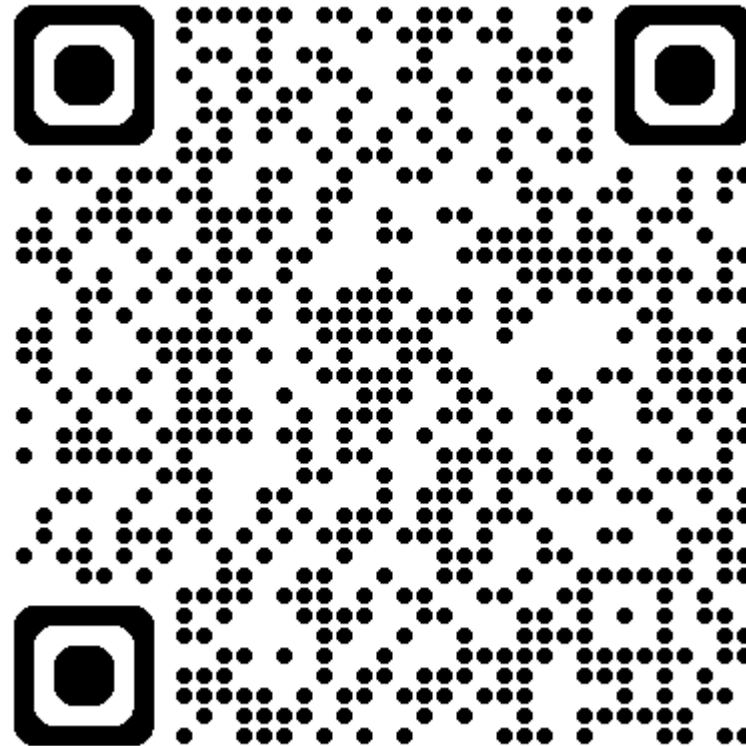


- ✓ What is a literature review?
- ✓ Who does a literature review?
- ✓ Review types.
- ✓ Challenges in conducting a literature review.
- ✓ Where will you search?
- ✓ Constructing an effective search strategy.

PLEASE SCAN TO COMPLETE OUR FEEDBACK FORM



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QUESTIONS?



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Thank You

Feel free to contact us with any queries:

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www.tcd.ie/library

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