

Conducting a Literature Review

Step 1: Finding Relevant Articles Workshop

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Overview

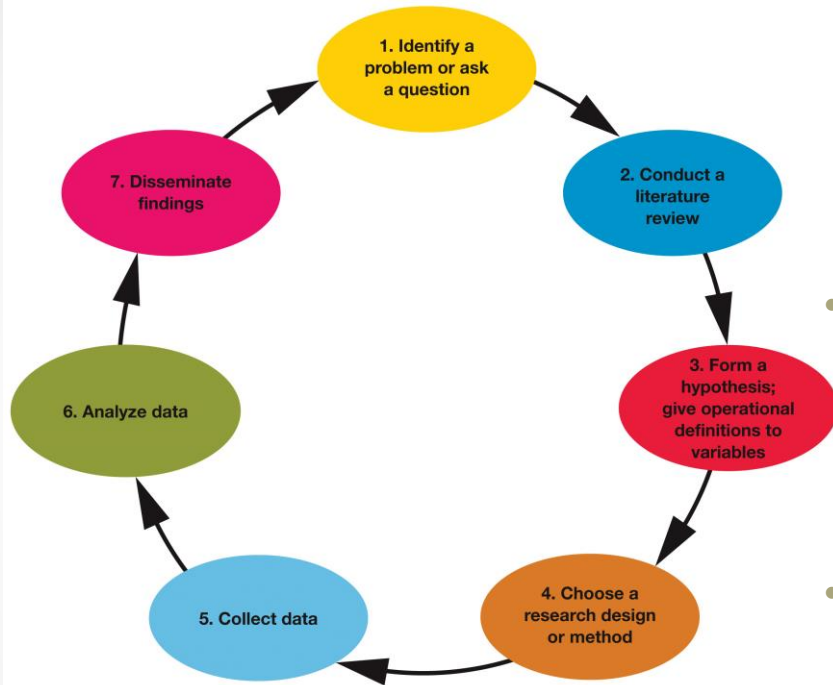
- This workshop will walk you through how to find scholarly articles as the first step in conducting a literature review. We will focus on the following:
 - What a literature is and why we do them
 - What constitutes a scholarly/peer-reviewed article
 - How to access library resources
 - Where to search for articles
 - How to search for relevant articles, and
 - How to determine which articles are relevant

What is a literature review?

- Start by reading the following short blog post:

- Sternheimer, S. (2019). How (and why) to write a literature review, Everyday Sociology Blog, <https://www.everydaysociologyblog.com/2019/02/how-and-why-to-write-a-literature-review.html>

- The first step to conducting research is to understand what is already known about the topic. We do this by reviewing the relevant related research and writing a summary of the findings; what we call a literature review.
- Doing a review of the relevant existing research helps scholars identify gaps in the research or things we still need to know or don't know enough about.
- Through the work of doing a literature review, you will learn to find, read, understand, and summarize scholarly journal articles to present the information in a concise and easy to understand format.



Ferris, K. and Stein, J. (2022). The Real World: An Introduction to Sociology, 8th edition. W.W. Norton: p40.

What is a scholarly/peer-reviewed article?

- The first step in the literature review is finding relevant scholarly articles to review. That means peer-reviewed journal articles.
- We DO **NOT** use random things found online, Wikipedia, ChatGPT, newspaper or magazine articles because we cannot verify where the information is from or if it is based on sound research.
- What is a peer-reviewed journal article?
 - Review using the link below.
<http://guides.pnw.edu/c.php?g=492802&p=3371638>
 - <https://www.library.illinois.edu/ugl/howdoi/scholarly/>
 - Additional helpful info at:
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/552/1/>
 - If you've found a source and you're not sure or you want to double check, then Google the journal title and look at the description that comes up. If it is described as a blog, website, magazine, newspaper then it is not a scholarly academic journal source and should not be used.

Using PNW Library Resources

- PNW students can access everything online from any computer. Start by going to the library home page.
 - <https://library.pnw.edu/>
- If you're on campus, you won't have to log in. If you're off campus, you'll be asked to log in at some point.
- Review tips for distance learners here:
<http://guides.pnw.edu/distancelearners>
- If you know the name of an article you're looking for, you can search on the main page. If not, it's best not to use that function.
- If you're **searching for articles using key words** (this is how to start!), go to the list of databases page. JSTOR is a good database to use because you can limit your search to sociology journals by doing an advanced search.
 - Some useful tutorials provided by the library can be found at:
 - <http://guides.pnw.edu/>


Where to search?

- Go to the PNW library home page and click on **Databases**
- Go to the letter J, click, and scroll down to see JSTOR. Click on **JSTOR**
- On the main JSTOR page, look at the top right of the search box and click on **Advanced Search**
- Scroll down to Narrow Results and click the box for **Articles**
- Scroll further down to limit the dates and under **Journal Filter** click the box for **Sociology**
- THEN start searching for various key words in various combinations

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231 Databases found


All A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z #

J

JANUS (Cambridge University Press) 
Janus is a self-funded project, established in October 2002 to provide a single point of enhanced access to catalogues of archives and manuscript collections held throughout Cambridge. The number and range of participating repositories - both University and non-University - continues to widen, promising in due course the near comprehensive coverage of archives in the city and surrounding area.

JBI 
Alternative Name(s) & Keywords: Joanna Briggs Institute
JBI CoNNECT+ (Clinical Crime Network of Evidence for Care and Therapeutics) contains the JBI Library of Systematic Reviews, Best Practice Information sheets, Evidence Summaries and Evidence Based Recommended Practices.

Journals@Ovid Full Text (Ovid) 
Ovid provides access to hundreds of journals through the Journals@Ovid database.

JSTOR 
Full-text digital archive of over 700 scholarly journals, especially strong in Social Sciences, Humanities, Economics, and Mathematics.

ITEM TYPE

Articles Research Reports
 Reviews Miscellaneous
 Books

LANGUAGE

All Languages

PUBLICATION DATE

FROM TO

2000

(yyyy or yyyy/mm or yyyy/mm/dd)

JOURNAL OR BOOK TITLE

ISBN

Journal Filter

Narrow by discipline and/or journal

Moving from Question to Search Terms to Articles

- Write down your topic and focus and then brainstorm various key words and phrases to use in your search.
 - Come up with as many synonyms for each as possible. What other words mean the same thing? For instance, if you're looking at life outcomes you should also search specifically for educational attainment, socio-economic status, and social mobility. Once you start looking at articles you should note the various terms used by the authors and try those.
 - Try searching for various key words on their own and in combination. Do not search for an entire question (that doesn't work well!).
 - Review **Boolean operators** using the below link and try them out.
 - <http://guides.pnw.edu/c.php?g=492802&p=3371627>
 - For example, try combining search terms using the word "and" to combine terms. Try putting quotes around phrases to see what you come up with.
 - **Remember that you will have to wade through articles to find those that are actually relevant. This will take some time and work. Don't expect to just use whatever comes up with the first search or two.**
 - If the title sounds like it answers your specific research question then read the abstract. What is the research question for that article? Does it match your focus? If not, don't use it. If it might, then read the introduction and conclusion. If it still looks like it might, then save it as a pdf to go back to and read through.

Tips to Finding Relevant Articles

- **Tip #1:** Use JSTOR *advanced* search and limit your search to sociology scholarly articles. Scroll down and filter to only look at sociology journals.
- **Tip #2:** Try various search terms in different combinations. Look at the articles you're finding and take note of language used for different concepts and add those to your search terms list.
- **Tip #3:** Read the title, article, abstract, and introduction to figure out the research question.
 - If the article you're looking at doesn't actually do research answering your particular question, but talks about it a bit in the literature review, what should you do?
 - Look at the literature review and see who they cite.
 - Go to the bibliography and find the cites/references for those sources.
 - Then use library resources to locate them and determine if they are useful or not.
 - You can try doing this from the main page but if that doesn't work, use the "ejournals" resource to find the journal, volume, number, and then article you want.

- **Tip #4:** If you find one or two articles that appear to be good matches, look to see who has cited that article in their work.
 - You can do this by searching in Google *scholar* (<https://scholar.google.com/>), finding that article, and using the “Cited by” link underneath the main link.
 - Remember to go back to library resources to find articles and to make sure they are relevant. Always ask yourself if the question in that study matches your question.
- **Tip #5:** You should **NEVER pay** for an article.
 - You can access library material online from home by going through the library home page.
 - If the library does not have something then you can request it through InterLibrary Loan, which is done online.
 - <https://library.pnw.edu/interlibrary-loan/>
- **Tip #6:** Use the help available. Remember that the librarians are available to assist you if you run into trouble.
 - <http://guides.pnw.edu/distancelearners>
- **Tip #7:** Save all articles as pdf files to the cloud for future use.

Let's Practice

- Pretend my question is: what factors affect educational attainment? (I have it written out on a sticky note on my computer screen)
 - I go to JSTOR and do an advanced search within sociology journals using the terms “educational attainment.”
 - One of the first articles is titled “Race, Class, and Educational Opportunity: Trends in the Sociology of Education” by Epps (1995). Is it a good fit? What can we tell from the title? This is related to education, but is it really about what factors have an impact on the level of education someone receives?
 - What can we learn from the abstract?
 - “This essay examines some of the trends in educational, sociological, and social psychological research on inequality of educational opportunity for African Americans in the United States. A review of theoretical approaches and methodological developments is followed by an overview of research and theory in selected substantive areas; social allocation processes in schools (ability grouping, tracking, etc.), the relationship of poverty to academic achievement, and educational attainment. The article concludes with recommendations for future research.”
 - Is this a good fit? While this article is related to my topic of education, it doesn't actually research what factors have an impact on educational attainment. This article is really about opportunities. BUT it is worth looking at the article to see what sources they cite in regards to the relationships between poverty and educational attainment, finding those, and seeing if they are a better fit.

Get started!

- In this workshop you learned what a literature is, what constitutes a scholarly/peer-reviewed article, how to access library resources, where to search for articles, how to search for articles, and how to determine if an article is relevant to your research.
- Now it's time to practice various search terms and combinations to find articles related to your topic and focus.
- As you get results, start by reading the title of the article to decide if it is relevant or not. If it clearly does not, then skip it.
 - If you aren't sure, then click on it and read the abstract. Remember that the articles need to answer your specific research question.
 - If it's a stretch or you have to explain how it fits, then it doesn't work so move on to the next one.
 - If one or two sentences or paragraphs in the literature review are relevant, then see who is cited, look in the bib, and search for those articles to see if they are indeed relevant for your work.
- Save articles as you find ones that may work. You'll need to read them over later to determine if they do indeed work or not.
- You can find additional useful tips at:
<http://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/literaturereview>