**What is a Literature Review?**

“A literature review discusses published information in a particular subject area, and sometimes information in a particular subject area within a certain time period. It has an organizational pattern and combines both summary and synthesis. The summary is a recap of the important information of the source; the synthesis is a re-organization, or a reshuffling, of that information. It might give a new interpretation of old material or combine new with old interpretations. Or it might trace the intellectual progression of the field, including major debates. And depending on the situation, the literature review may evaluate the sources and advise the reader on what is the most pertinent or relevant.”

**How is a literature review different from an academic research paper?**

“While the main focus of an academic research paper is to support your own argument, the focus of a literature review is to summarize and synthesize the arguments and ideas of others.” The academic research paper also covers a range of sources, but it is usually a select number of sources, because the emphasis is on the argument. Likewise, a literature review can also have an “argument,” but it is not as important as covering a number of sources. In short, an academic research paper and a literature review contain some of the same elements. In fact, many academic research papers will contain a literature review section. But it is the aspect of the study (the argument or the sources) that is emphasized that determines what type of document it is.

**Why write literature reviews?**

“Literature reviews provide you with a handy guide to a particular topic. If you have limited time to conduct research, literature reviews can give you an overview or act as a stepping stone. For professionals, they are useful reports that keep them up to date with what is current in the field. For scholars, the depth and breadth of the literature review emphasizes the credibility of the writer in his or her field. Literature reviews also provide a solid background for a research paper's investigation. Comprehensive knowledge of the literature of the field is essential to most research papers.”

**What is the format for literature reviews?**

“Just like most academic papers, literature reviews also must contain at least three basic elements: an introduction or background information section; the body of the review containing the discussion of sources; and, finally, a conclusion and/or recommendations section to end the paper.

* Introduction: Gives a quick idea of the topic of the literature review, such as the central theme or organizational pattern.
* Body: Contains your discussion of sources and is organized thematically (see below for more information on each).
* Conclusions/Recommendations: Discuss what you have drawn from reviewing literature so far. Where might the discussion proceed?”

**Guidance for writing a literature review can be found a**t:

Reference

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