

**Guidelines for Course Code: LS-101N****Guidelines for Preparing Literature Survey**

The guidelines taken from [1] are simply for illustration purpose to write the literature survey. You can also talk to your supervisor for any guidance during writing the literature survey.

A literature survey is a kind of review of academic sources on a particular topic. It provides a general idea of existing knowledge, allowing you to classify related theories, methods, and any gaps in the existing research.

The literature survey is normally conducted to put your research within existing knowledge while writing dissertation, thesis or research paper. The literature survey provides you a chance to:

- Show your acquaintance with the topic
- Build a theoretical framework and methodology for the research
- Align yourself with respect to other researchers
- Give an idea about how your research addresses a gap

It is also possible that you are writing a literature survey as a stand-alone researcher. In this case, the intention is to judge and demonstrate your knowledge about the current state of research to make academic debates on a specific topic.

In both the above cases, the process of conducting a literature survey remains the same.

To write a literature review, it involves finding pertinent publications (such as books, conference papers and journal articles), decisively analyzing them, and explaining what you found. This process involves major five steps:

1. **Search** for relevant literature
2. **Evaluate** and select sources
3. **Identify** themes, debates and gaps
4. **Outline** the structure
5. **Write** your literature survey

A literature survey not only summarizes the existing knowledge on a specific topic, it also analyzes, synthesizes, and critically evaluates the existing sources to give a clear picture of the state of knowledge on the subject.

**Step 1: Search for relevant literature**

- (a) Definite topic is required before starting the literature survey.
- (b) Make a list of similar or related keywords linked to your research question. Try to add new keywords in this list if you find any new keywords in the process of your literature search.
- (c) Search for relevant sources: The keywords obtained from step (b) above are used for searching the sources. Some of the useful databases to search for journals and articles include:
  - Library catalogue of your University or college
  - Inspec (physics, engineering and computer science)

- DBLP (basic sciences, engineering and computer science)
- Project Muse (humanities and social sciences)
- Medline (life sciences and biomedicine)
- Econlite (economics)
- Google Scholar
- JSTOR
- EBSCO

You can use boolean operators like AND, OR and NOT to refine your searches. You can also read the abstract and identify that whether it is useful for your specified topic. If it is useful than check its bibliographic references to back track and identify previous relevant sources.

### **Step 2: Evaluate and select sources**

Before selecting the correct source of knowledge you should evaluate which article or source is useful for your definite topic of research. While reading any article, ask the following question to yourself:

- What kind of problem or question is addressed by the author?
- What are the key features and concepts of the article?
- Is the article addresses some new theories, models and methods or uses some established frameworks?
- What are the results and conclusions of the article?
- How the article helps you to relate to other literature in the field?
- Is article helps in your topic? What are its key theories, concepts and arguments?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the research?

While selecting any article, must sure that you read any landmark studies and major theories in your field of research so that its contents are trustworthy. This can be checked by the citation count of the article using Google Scholar. A high citation count specifies that article is significant in the field of research and shall be included in the literature survey.

### **Step 3: Identify themes, debates, and gaps**

Before starting the argument and structure of literature survey, you should be aware of the connections and relationships between the sources you have read so far. Based on your reading and notes, you can come across for:

- **Trends and patterns (in theory, method or results):** Is approaches you read are still useful or becomes less popular over time?
- **Themes:** Which kind of questions or concepts reappear across the literature?
- **Debates, conflicts and contradictions:** Is different sources disagree to some extent?
- **Essential publications:** Is there any theories or studies that are prominent and changed the direction of the field?
- **Gaps:** Still is there any possibility to explore new things from the read literature you have read and still missing in the literature? Is there any weaknesses that need to be addressed?

The above steps will let you to prepare the structure of your literature survey and (if applicable) give you an idea about how your own research will contribute to existing knowledge.

#### **Step 4: Outline your literature survey's structure**

Prepare a rough idea of your approach before writing the literature survey. There are many ways to organize the body of a survey. Depending on the length of your literature survey, many of these strategies are clubbed.

- (a) Prepare a list of development of sources or topics and arrange them with respect to time. Critically analyze, show key points and summarize them in a brief
- (b) If you found some recurring themes, put them in subsection of central theme and concentrate to different aspects of the topic.
- (c) If you read the sources from different fields or discipline, than compare the results and conclusions arises from the different methods.
- (d) Any literature survey is a backbone of new theoretical framework. While writing the literature survey, you should converse different theories, models and key points of read topics.
- (e) At last and not the least, argue yourself for the significance of certain theoretical methods, or may combine different concepts to create your own framework for your future research.

#### **Step 5: Write your literature survey**

The literature survey should have an introduction, main body of the text followed by conclusion. The contents on each can be your choice depending upon the requirement of your research.

#### **Reference:**

1. <https://www.scribbr.com/dissertation/literature-review/> (Author: Shona McCombes)