LITERATURE REVIEWS: PART 2

Literature reviews are based on scholarly sources. You will use current sources for a science literature review; however, you may use older literature for a humanities, history, or social sciences literature review to demonstrate how the arguments and scholarship have developed.

CRAFTING THE REVIEW

- Select a diverse group of credible authors; then, think about how the scholarly arguments relate to each other. Abstracts and introductions will be especially helpful for you since those sections of scholarly works often explain the work’s relationship to the other literature.

- Use the following questions as you survey the literature and compose your review:
  - Which of the sources is the most and the least convincing?
  - How does one scholar’s approach and findings supplement or contradict those of another scholar?
  - What is the primary contribution of each scholar to the subject matter? How do their findings contribute to our understanding of a topic?

- Try to situate the authors in relation to each other. Think of it almost like a dialogue between scholars who are trying to get to the bottom of their subject matter.

PUTTING THE AUTHORS IN A DIALOGUE WITH EACH OTHER

- To do this effectively, look for the key patterns, conflicts, and themes in the literature.

- Display the ways that one scholar’s interpretation challenges another’s and perhaps explain how they came to different conclusions.

- Later, explain the relation of the works to each other and point out the gaps in the literature that the scholars have missed.

Tip: Choose authors with established credentials in the subject area.