

Preface

This book is organized as a road map for researching, arguing, and composing a literature review. Doing a literature review is a complex project for even the most advanced researcher, especially if learning how to compose a literature review has been by trial and error. To become successful at this craft, researchers need many skills. They need a way to narrow the research topic and to focus their literature search, and they need the tools necessary to negotiate the myriad books, periodicals, and reports about their topic. Therefore, the purpose of this book is to gather into one volume many of the strategies, tools, and techniques of the experienced researcher, in order to help the reader build a high-quality literature review.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

1. The second edition has been reorganized to be even more user friendly.
 - Useful references, virtual tools, and online support have been added to several chapters.
 - Research, organizational tasks, and bibliographic work can now be completed—using online tools, traditional methods, or a combination of both.
 - The new flowchart on the inside cover guides the reader through the steps, tasks, activities, and concepts needed for a successful literature review.
 - The appropriate segment of the flowchart also appears at the beginning of each chapter to guide the reader through the content, tasks, and activities of the chapter.
 - Key vocabulary is listed and defined at the head of each chapter.

2. Figures, tips, and examples have been expanded and added, covering when and how to write in the early stages of working on a literature review. These ideas, including the use of journals and memoranda, make the task of writing up the final review easier and more efficient.
3. The text is easier to navigate. Chapters are streamlined. Necessary concepts and tasks are clearly defined. Each step of the literature review process has been simplified for the reader's use.

AUDIENCE

Those considering pursuing an advanced degree, but not yet decided, can use this book as a preview of what will be required. Those new to research can use this text to learn their craft, while more advanced students may use it as a means to review their skills, and perhaps pick up some new tips. Those teaching the craft of research may want to use this book as a class text for their students. This book is mainly intended for two groups of researchers, those completing master's theses and those working on doctoral dissertations. If you are doing a class research assignment or completing most master's degree projects, the text will address the type of literature review that summarizes and evaluates the existing knowledge on a particular topic. Some master's theses, and all doctoral dissertations, require a more sophisticated literature review. This book also addresses the advanced literature review, one that requires research to argue and define a problem needing original research.

While this book uses education as its context, the model, strategies, and tools presented apply to a much wider audience within the social sciences. Because education is an applied science, many of the examples and strategies contained in the book consider the literature from a variety of vantage points, including social and organizational psychology, sociology, and group psychology. Thus, students studying these disciplines will also find this text helpful.

SPECIAL FEATURES AND TEXT ORGANIZATION

All students, beginning or advanced, can use a straightforward guide for maneuvering through the ambiguities of framing the topic,

managing information, developing the argument, and acquiring the composition skills needed to produce a successful literature review. There are definite tricks of the trade for making this project an efficient and rewarding experience. This text is organized around a six-step literature review model to guide the reader through the project. These steps are as follows:

- Step 1. Select a topic.
- Step 2. Search the literature.
- Step 3. Develop the argument.
- Step 4. Survey the literature.
- Step 5. Critique the literature.
- Step 6. Write the review.

Each chapter addresses a specific step of the model and contains several learning aids to increase reader comprehension. These learning aids include the following:

- Key vocabulary appears at the beginning of each chapter allowing the reader to focus on key ideas.
- Exercises work the reader through the more involved procedures. These guided practice opportunities and examples aid in checking understanding.
- Specific references suggest software that can simplify the work of organizing material and revising the written composition.
- Graphics and charts clarify the key topics under discussion, and models present pictures that tie together complex themes and procedures.
- At the end of each chapter, tips provide specific ideas for using the material covered in the chapter. These tips help the reader make immediate, practical use of the material.
- Each chapter has a summary that gives a brief recap of the chapter's contents and acts as an aid for the reader to review information.
- Each chapter closes with a checklist. These lists allow the reader to track progress through the entire literature review project.

- The end of the text contains a glossary for definitions of often-used terms and a reference list of works for further reading.

When confronting the task of successfully producing a literature review, there are two choices. You can either proceed in an organized fashion using a book such as this one to guide your endeavors, or you can plunge blindly into the project trying to find the time and resources needed, while crossing your fingers and hoping for the best. Experienced researchers know that trial and error is frustrating and time consuming, and rarely successful. Learning the key ideas in this text will save you from frustration and lost time.