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Top Tips for Nailing Your Literature Review

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LEARNING OUTCOMES



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At the end of this session, you will know...

- What a literature review is and its purpose?
- Who does a literature review?
- What are the different types of reviews?
- Finding information for your literature review
- Assessing your results



Image source: <https://www.onedisser.com/blog/literature-review.html>

WHAT IS 'THE LITERATURE'?



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An evolving network of all the scholarly writing on a topic, presented in whatever form: article, book, conference paper, thesis, etc.

*'The existing literature is the story so far.
You have to know where you are before
you can go forward.'*

Dr John Classey: [Literature Reviews: An Overview for Graduate Students \(2009\)](#)



WHAT IS A LITERATURE REVIEW?



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Stock photo: Paperwork being arranged.

A literature review is an evaluation critique of scholarly literature that has been published on a particular subject.

- It is **NOT** a summary, nor survey
- It analyses, critiques, and synthesises the current knowledge base of a subject

STRUCTURE OF A LITERATURE REVIEW



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1. Introduction

- Background information on topic
- Purpose of review
- Scope of review

2. Body

- Historical background
- Overview of existing research
- Principal question
- Categories or themes
- Evaluation of strengths & weaknesses

3. Synthesis

- Combine findings, identify patterns & trends
- Your topic in context of broader study
- New research question or hypothesis

4. Conclusion

- Summary of key points in the literature
- Discuss gaps in the existing knowledge
- Implications for future research

Information source: Adapted from [Writing the Review - Literature Reviews - Research Guides at University of Michigan Library](#)

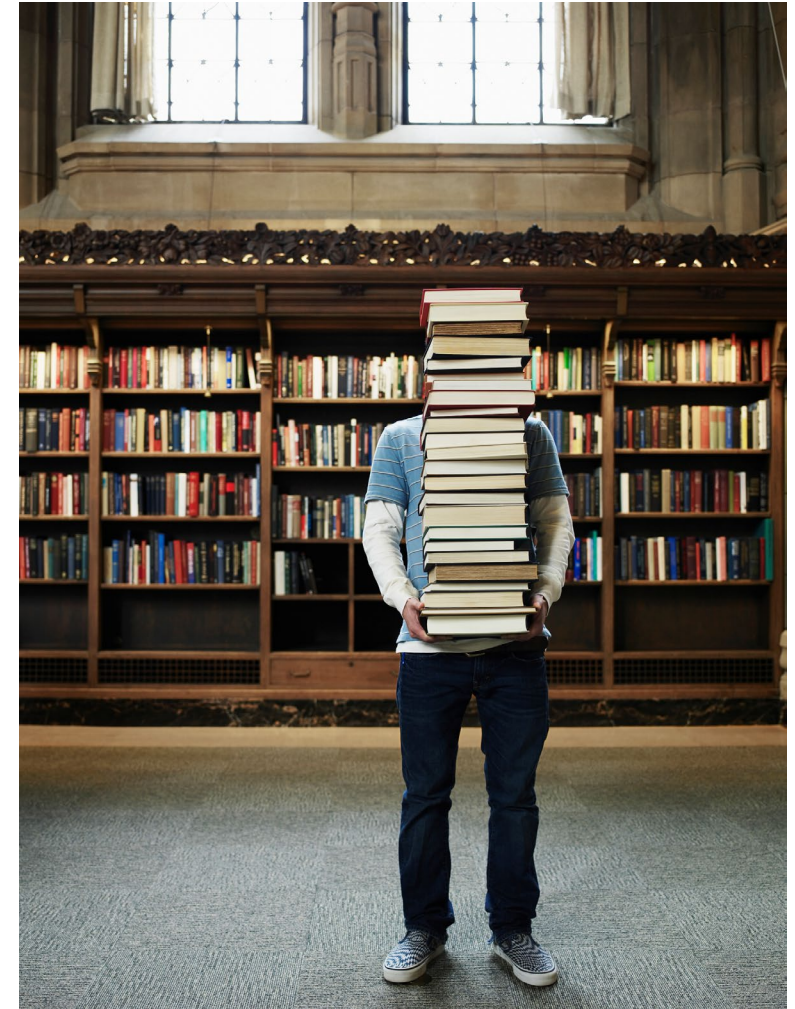
WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?



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A literature review is used to **identify gaps in existing knowledge** and to set the context for research studies.

- It shows an in-depth grasp of your topic
- It shows an understanding where your own research fits and adds to an existing body of knowledge



Stock photo: Books being held in a library.

WHO DOES A LITERATURE REVIEW?



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Undergraduates

- As part of essays, dissertations, theses, or research projects.

Postgraduates (Taught and Research)

- In existing scholarship, identifying gaps, and contributing to their field.

Academics, Professionals and Practitioners

- In fields like medicine, education, or business and to stay current with best practices and evidence-based approaches.

TYPES OF LITERATURE REVIEW



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What is your review type?

- Check with your supervisor
- Look at your course handbook
- Consult library sources/reading lists

Narrative
(traditional)
Review

Scoping Review

Mapping
Review

Rapid Review

State-of-the-art
Review

Systematic
Review

Systematic
Review and
Meta-Analysis

Umbrella
Review

DETERMINING YOUR REVIEW TYPE



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[Right Review](#) helps to identify which review is right for you.



[Sage Research](#) helps with data analysis and step-by-step planning guide.

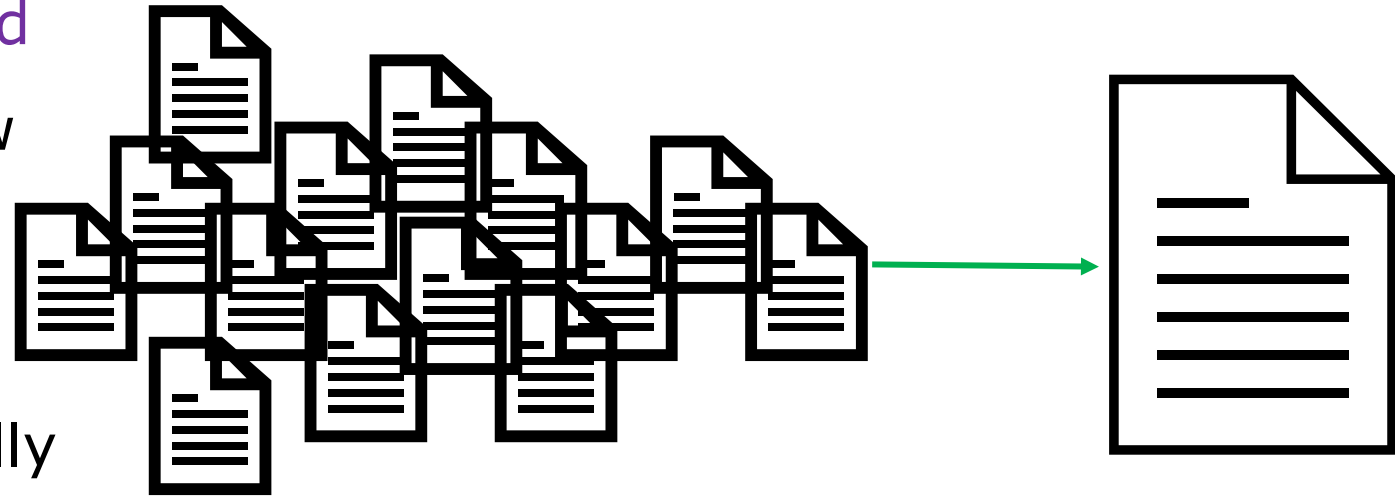
Sage Research Methods

Supercharging research



[Advanced Search](#)

- Choose a **well-defined and focused question** for your literature review
- Decide on the **main concepts**
- Use **keywords** and **controlled vocabulary** to search systematically
- **Evaluate** the materials your search retrieves
- **Read** through your materials to determine which to keep or delete



Join [HITS](#) for **Database Searching Basics**
OR **Database Searching Advanced** to learn
more about search.



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Over To You

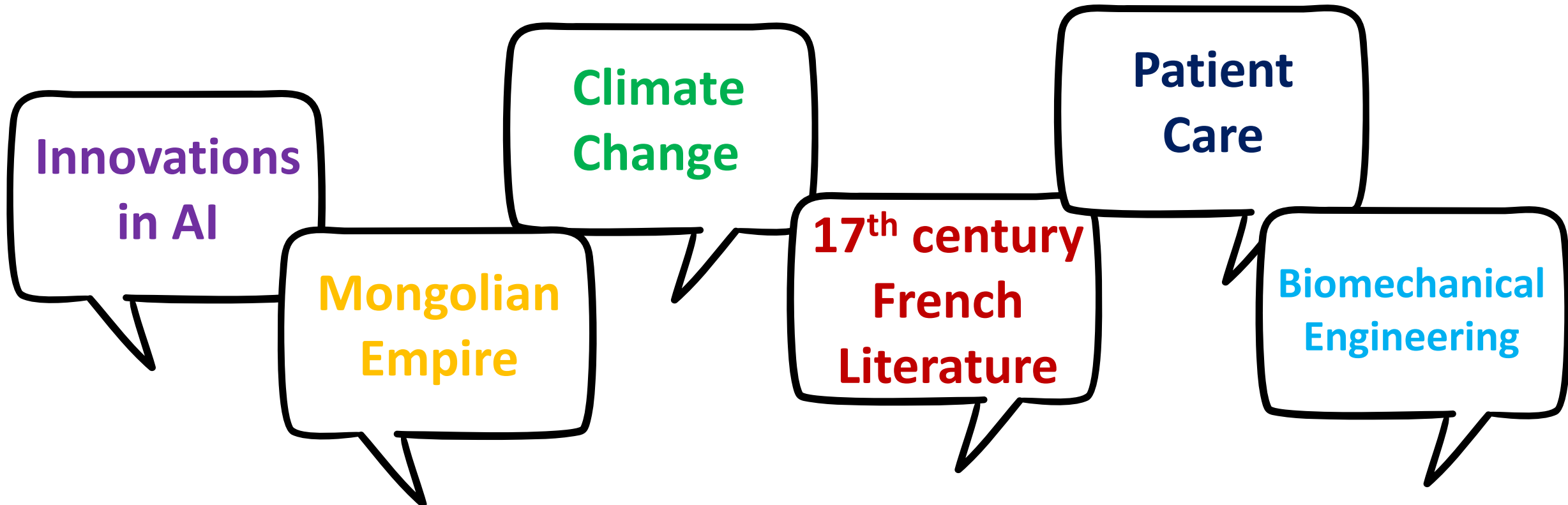


TOPIC DISCUSSION



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One of the first tasks of a literature review is to consider your topic. What is a topic in your discipline? Spend 5 minutes discussing your topic with a partner



KEEPING FOCUS



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- Make sure your topic is specific but not too broad or too narrow
- Don't use leading questions that show bias
 - You want to be as neutral as possible
- Use detailed inclusion and exclusion criteria (ex: dates, language, unpublished research, etc.)



Information source: Aveyard, H. (2023). *Doing a literature review in health and social care : A practical guide*. McGraw-Hill Education.



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Finding Information for Your Literature Review



WHERE WILL YOU SEARCH?



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- **Databases** - You generally use a database to find out more about a *topic*. Databases contain comprehensive, quality-assured, reliable academic information, much of which is peer-reviewed. You use the library catalogue to search for a specific title.
- **References from articles** - This is where authors got their information
- **Grey literature** - Typically PhD theses, government/company/organisation websites, conference proceedings, etc.
- **Other** – You may find information from social media, videos, etc.

SOURCES OF LITERATURE



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Trinity Library provides access
to over 1,000 databases.

1021 Databases

[All](#) [A](#) [B](#) [C](#) [D](#) [E](#) [F](#) [G](#) [H](#) [I](#) [J](#) [K](#) [L](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O](#) [P](#) [Q](#)

A

[Africa and the New Imperialism](#)

Alternate Name(s): AM Explorer Humanities Essentials

Uncover the history of European colonisation across the century through the rare printed works, diaries and journals presented within Africa and the New Imperialism.

[A Global History of Epidemics, 1800-1970](#)

Alternate Name(s): AM Explorer Humanities Essentials

A Global History of Epidemics, 1800-1970 brings together part of history for public health and medicinal advancement, correspondence, official reports, diagrams, photographs of disease prevention, outbreak management, sanitation and of major epidemics and pandemics across the globe in the

Citation chaining

Backward citation searching
Older publications

Forward citation searching
Newer publications

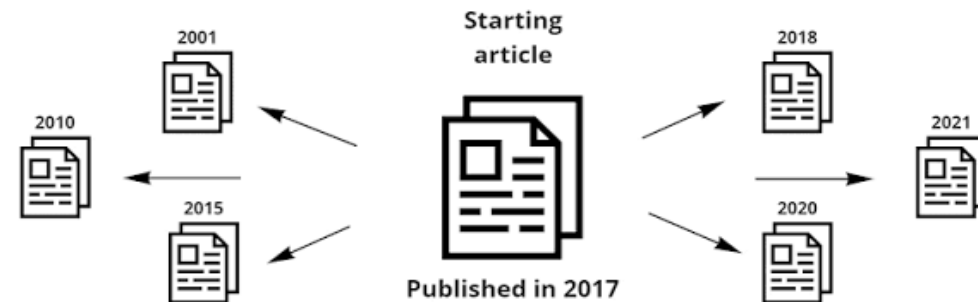


Image source: Grey Literature and Other Sources - LibGuides at Adelaide University

Searching the citations in articles is a
good place to get information on a topic.

To search databases use:

- Your own **keywords** (include synonyms and variant spellings)
 - **Synonyms** are words with identical or nearly identical meanings.
- Boolean operators (**AND, OR, NOT**)
 - AND = narrows, OR = expand, NOT = exclude
- Truncation symbol (*) and consider **phrase searching** (" ")
- Controlled vocabulary also known as **subjects, subject authority, thesaurus, descriptors, MeSH**, (some databases do not have Controlled Vocabulary)

EXAMPLE TOPIC & SEARCH TERMS



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Topic: The impact of commuting to school on young Europeans.

Main Concepts:

1. Commuting to school
2. Youth
3. Europeans

Keywords:

1. commut* OR travel* OR "public transport*"
2. "young people" OR "young adult*" OR child*
OR school* OR student* OR youth*
3. europe*

RESULTS OF SEARCH



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There were 9,441 results from Web of Science. This is too many to review so your search needs to be refined.

To narrow the results further, continue to look for keywords by:

- Using a thesaurus
- Browsing articles or texts
- Doing a basic Internet search on the topic

Physical activity accrued as part of public transport use in England

By [Patterson, R \(Patterson, R.\)](#) ^[1]; [Webb, E \(Webb, E.\)](#) ^[2]; [Millett, C \(Millett, C.\)](#) ^[1]; [Laverty, AA \(Laverty, A. A.\)](#) ^[1]

Are you this author?

[View Web of Science ResearcherID and ORCID](#) (provided by Clarivate)

Source [JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH](#)

[← View Journal Impact](#)

Volume: 41 Issue: 2 Page: 222-230
DOI: 10.1093/pubmed/fdy099

Published JUN 2019

Indexed 2019-11-18

Document Type Article

Abstract

Background Walking and cycling for transport (active travel) is an important source of physical activity with established health benefits. However, levels of physical activity accrued during public transport journeys in England are unknown.

Methods Using the English National Travel Survey 2010-14 we quantified active travel as part of public transport journeys. Linear regression models compared levels of physical activity across public transport modes, and logistic regression models compared the odds of undertaking 30 min a day of physical activity.

Image source: <https://www-webofscience-com.elib.tcd.ie/wos/allldb/full-record/WOS:000493396400016>



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Assessing Your Results



EVALUATING YOUR RESULTS



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- Read and re-read through your results
- Are they relevant to your topic?
- Critically assess your results

EARLY REPORT · Volume 351, Issue 9103, P637-641, February 28, 1998

[Download Full Issue](#)

RETRACTED: Ileal-lymphoid-nodular hyperplasia, non-specific colitis, and pervasive developmental disorder in children

[Dr AJ Wakefield, FRCS](#) ^a · [SH Murch, MB](#) ^b · [A Anthony, MB](#) ^a · [J Linnell, PhD](#) ^a · [DM Casson, MRCP](#) ^b · [M Malik, MRCP](#) ^b · et al. [Show more](#)

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Summary

Background

We investigated a consecutive series of children with chronic enterocolitis and regressive developmental disorder. **RETRACTED**

Methods

Figures (3)

[Figure Viewer](#)

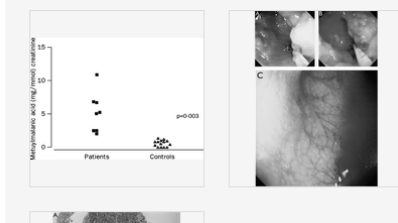


Image source: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(97\)11096-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(97)11096-0/fulltext)

Information source: Aveyard, H. (2023). *Doing a literature review in health and social care : A practical guide*. McGraw-Hill Education.



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Need More Info?



WRITING GUIDES



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Search the Library catalogue for more books on writing.

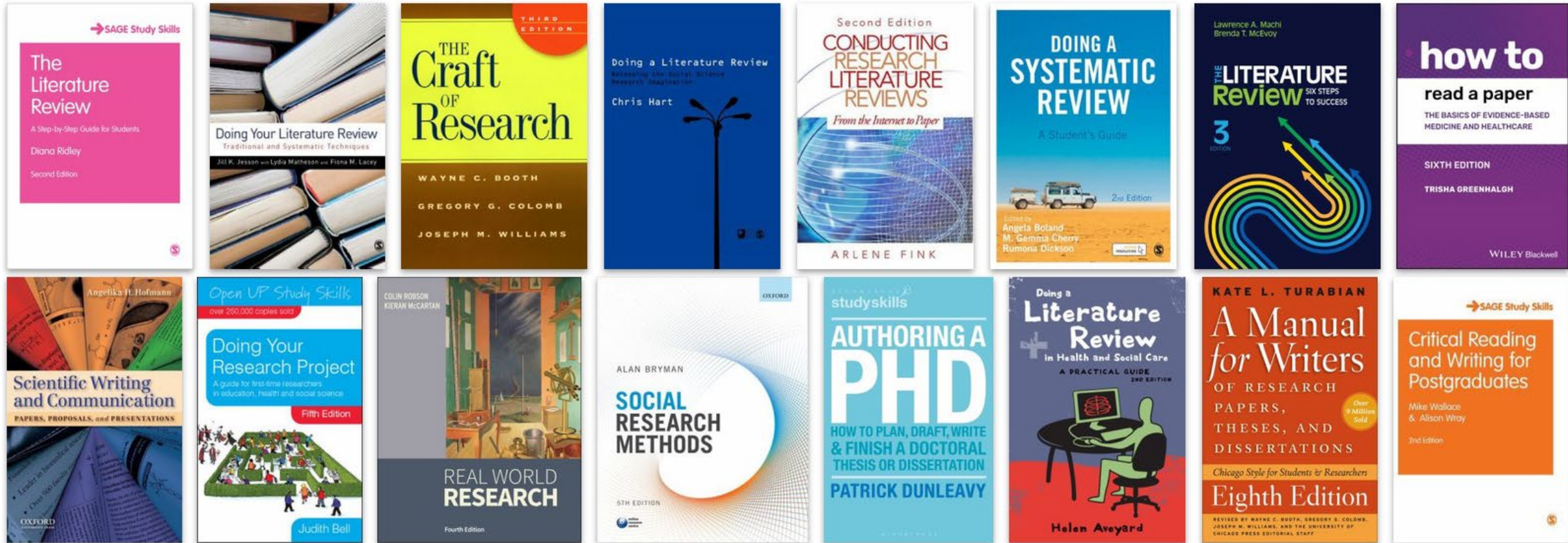


Image source: <https://tcd.eu.iiivega.com/search/card?id=c385a98e-5165-51f2-b94e-74a87c48286c&entityType=FormatGroup>

MORE HELP



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Your [Subject Librarian](#)

Our [HITS classes](#)

- Database Searching (Basic & Advanced)
- Managing Your References: EndNote 2025

Our [Guides & Tutorials page](#)

Video – [Literature Reviews: An Overview for Graduate Students](#)

Our LibGuides

- [Writing a Literature Review](#)
- [Doing a Systematic Review](#)

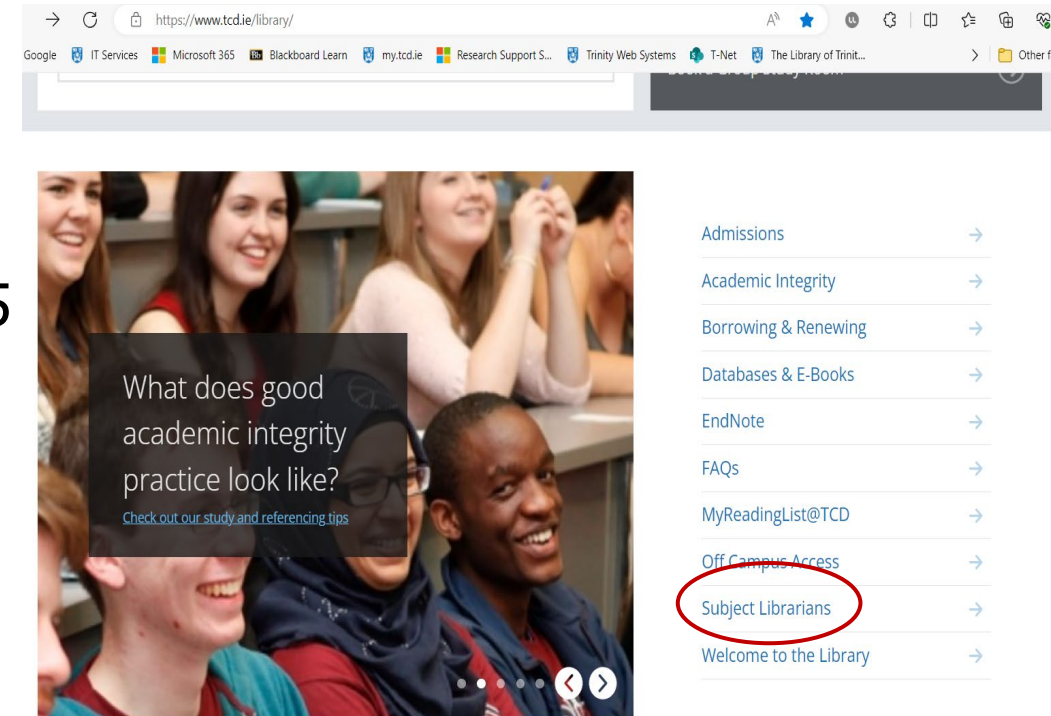


Image source: <https://www.tcd.ie/library/support/subjects/>

TODAY WE COVERED:



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- ✓ What is a literature review and its purpose?
- ✓ Who does a literature review?
- ✓ What are the different types of reviews?
- ✓ Finding Information for your literature review
- ✓ Assessing Your Results

FEEDBACK FORM



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QUESTIONS?



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Thank You

Feel free to contact us with any queries:

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