Literature Review Workshop

Helping you sort through & make sense of all that academic writing!

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Why this workshop?

& why are you here?
Why do a lit review?

To show where your work fits within what others have already done...

you must make a case / prove that your work is worthwhile & important!
Best uses of a lit review

Situating your research within the larger field
Assessing a particular methodology
Finding trends or promising patterns in a field
Exploring what has-- and hasn’t-- been done yet (which sets you up well to present what YOU propose!)
Making a case for the importance of your work
Worst types of lit reviews

“Everything but the kitchen sink” approach: unstructured review of everything you’ve read

“I’m proving I read everything” approach: including too many citations and too much background than what’s necessary

Background & context = lit review: you are writing a strong argument for the value of your work, not contextualizing and providing background on everything
How to approach a lit review?

**Broad overview:** select a few papers & review to get a sense of the literature (you don’t need too many to start!)

**Purpose:** decide whether you’ll be making an argument, providing context, situating your work in a larger field, etc.

**Matrix**:* create a table to organize your papers & ideas that many can work on at once-- CAREFULLY CONSIDER YOUR “FILTERS”

**Summary**:* translate your matrix into bullet points based on THEME
Which papers do I start with?

Review papers
Meta-analyses
Theoretical framework reviews

Save these for later...

Experiments
Case studies
example

NOVA Wonders literature review

Delivered to WGBH Education / basis of our pubs & presentations
Literature Matrix
an simple way to organize those papers!
What is a literature matrix?

Organizes your literature review by:

- Paper (row)
- Variables of interest (column)

Forces you to focus only on the most relevant parts of your papers

Easy for multiple people to work on at once

Simple transposition to summary and written docs
**Example lit review matrix**

**NOVA Wonders - using social media to promote informal science learning**

**Goal:** to establish a ‘lay of the land’ of the field of social media and learning

**Process:** compare peer-reviewed case studies across categories of interest
Each **row** was an experimental study
Each **column** was a category of interest (or potential variable)

- Design elements
  - Audience / measurement
- Dependent variables
  - Learning outcomes
- Independent variables
  - Platform / tool
  - Facilitation
  - Structural hierarchy
  - Degree of formality
Transitioning from matrix to summary
How to create a summary?

Create a list of the main themes, ideas, or categories

- *This should be based on some of your most important “columns” in your matrix*

Create bullet points under each theme with the main takeaway or finding from each paper

- *Include the citation, context, and other relevant info*
Example summary 1

- The learning environment should be community-driven, as opposed to expert-driven.
  - Rather than having an expert control the discussion entirely, the exchange between facilitator and audience should be more “participatory” and invite more interaction and feedback from the audience.

- A strong facilitator is needed to keep conversation and learning on-track.
  - These expert facilitators cannot exert too much direct control on the discussion, however; they must have good facilitation, moderation, or basic “listening” skills and encourage equal participation

- The online learning environment should have a sense of community, to mimic the exchanges between peers and promote a spirit of constructive exchange & discussion.
  - Rather than creating an open come-and-go-as-you-please SM learning environment, having some incentive to participate in the community continuously is what likely promises meaningful learning outcomes. Therefore, we will work with a committed group of NOVA learners who have been incentivized to participate throughout the learning experience.
example 2

*Polar Extremes* lit review / summary combo!
class example?

any volunteers?

Let’s think through together how to create the “columns” of the literature matrix.

Describe the goal of your lit review & what you’re exploring.

We can take it from there!
Break-out session:
Planning your matrix: what are your goals & filters?
Thank you!

We are here to help! Email us anytime:
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