Q&A from the Writing Center and Library Literature Review Panel held April 16, 2015

The following questions were asked and answered during the Writing Center and Library’s joint literature review webinar. If you have questions about these answers, please contact either editor@waldenu.edu or library@waldenu.edu.

Additionally, keep in mind that your Chair and Committee should be consulted for many of these questions as well, as expectations can vary from program to program and Chair to Chair. If you are ever unsure, make sure to reach out to your Chair.

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**Research Questions**

**Question:** Can you be too exhaustive  
**Answer:** You can certainly be too exhaustive; many people write literature reviews that wander and end up much larger than they need to be. By staying focused on your specific task/issue/problem and presenting the most pertinent information, this helps you make sure that you discuss things in-depth when you need to and that you don't spend time describing things that are related but off-topic. At the same time, you also need to reach saturation of your literature, something that your Chair and the Librarians can help you determine. Learn more on the Library’s website: [http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/literaturereview#s-lg-box-1524263](http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/literaturereview#s-lg-box-1524263)

**Question:** I know that you are supposed to research until the topic is saturated. Is it a good idea to look at the references of other studies to get an idea of sources for your literature review?  
**Answer:** That's a fantastic idea--use the research other articles have done to help you find research is a great way to save time.

**Question:** What if there is too little empirical material for research?  
**Answer:** If there's very limited empirical data and/or research on your topic, that is absolutely something that you should point out and discuss in your literature review. This research gap that you describe will be part of what you design your study to address or accommodate.

**Question:** They say that your research documentation should be within 3-5 years. When you cite the material and it is citing individuals from 2005, etc. how do you cite in literature review?  
**Answer:** Excellent question. The basic guideline is that your research should be primarily draw on research that is current and relevant. In practice, this means that the majority of your literature should be as current as possible; in some cases, though, you will necessarily draw on influential older research and writing. You may also be writing your study because there hasn't been a lot of recent research, too. It's not that you can't have older research, but that this should be the exception, not the norm. Many professors will give you a more...
specific guideline like "80% of sources from the last 5 years," but that's more committee-level instruction than a specific university cutoff.

**Question:** What if in your document they are citing older information, however, the actual author's date is 2012

**Answer:** That's called a secondary source citation and can be okay once in a while, but most of the time (especially in a lit review) your instructor will want you to focus on the current research. If you're ever not sure, I suggest checking with your Chair. Learn more about evaluating resources on the Library’s website:

http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/library/evaluating

**Question:** How do you know if your article is peer-reviewed? What do you look for?

**Answer:** Stop 1: Visit Ulrich's Periodicals Directory. We have a step-by-step guide here:

http://academicanswers.waldenu.edu/a.php?qid=173792

**Question:** Can you comment on the value of the Google citing cases for discovering more recent studies

**Answer:** Google can be very helpful for finding newer research that is hopefully related to your research interests. If you have an older article you can search for it by title in Google Scholar and you will hopefully see a link that says "cited by," this link will show you all of the articles that have cited the article you just looked up. An important thing to keep in mind is that you will still need to verify whether the article is peer reviewed.

**Question:** Might you know if software like Zotero allows for generating a document including the information entered for all of the articles (for example, a table similar to the literature review matrix)?

**Answer:** As far as I know Zotero does not allow you to do that. You CAN add notes to each record and you can add tags. So for example, you could tag all of your articles related to your theory with "theory". That allows you to click on that tag and see all of the articles that relate to theory. But it will not pull all of them into a nice document. You can learn more about Zotero here: http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/zotero

**Writing Questions**

**Question:** Is there a minimum page requirement? I thought it was 25 but have failed to find it anywhere in the rubric.

**Answer:** There is not a Walden-wide minimum page requirement for literature reviews, although some professors may give you a round number as a rule of thumb. Some topics need more discussion than others, especially if there's been a lot of previous research on your specific topic and focus. Less than 25 pages would usually be on the short side for a dissertation or doctoral study, but again it varies.
**Question:** How much leverage do I have to make my own statement in the literature review?

**Answer:** Great question—really, the synthesis part is about the literature (comparing and contrasting what the literature says), but you get to add your perspective by telling the reader what conclusions and analysis you have about that comparison/contrasting of the literature—telling the reader what the literature means and why it is important.

**Question:** Are there webinars on synthesis in writing?

**Answer:** There are—one presented live on Monday! Take a look for more information here: [http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/webinars](http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/webinars)

**Question:** I write a paragraph immediately as I read an article. Is this a good approach?

**Answer:** It can be, especially in helping you remember what you wrote and help you paraphrase. Keep in mind, though, that in your literature review you won't devote entire articles to one source for the most part—instead you'll discuss multiple sources in paragraphs (what we call synthesis).

**Question:** What is the appropriate way to cite sources retrieved from the Walden Library that are not available to others who do not have access to those articles such as JSTOR articles? I have been unable to locate in the APA manual.

**Answer:** You can delete the Walden access part of the URL to create a URL that works for getting anyone to the article access point. If you send a specific example to editor@waldenu.edu, we can point the part to delete out to you (or just reply with an example and I can respond here). However, keep in mind that for journal articles you need to provide a doi number if one is available for the article. We have examples of doing so online: [http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/apa/references/examples](http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/apa/references/examples)

**Question:** Where can I find the doctoral study APA template?

**Answer:** The best place to go is on your program's page on our website: [http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/capstone](http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/capstone)

**Question:** When defending the proposal will not including every detail for each source be challenged?

**Answer:** Your committee members always reserve the right to challenge you on anything at any time...but the balance is making sure that you have all the _necessary_ details without giving _all_ the details. If you're having trouble determining what to screen out, write up an outline first and discuss it with your committee. You don't want to have details that are conspicuously absent, but that usually happens when you haven't made clear _why_ the details that you present are relevant and tie into your problem/argument/etc.
Attendee Suggestions

Organizational tool suggestion: Use Qiqqa. It is a great organizing tool.

Organizational and note taking suggestion: Zotero is great and try to do Annotated Bibliography after read the article just my experience so far

Starting your study suggestion: The School of Management and Technology asks that students start the literature review by providing a critical analysis and synthesis of the evolution of their Conceptual Framework, Supporting and contrasting Theories and or Conceptual Frameworks. Additionally, include critical analysis and synthesis of studies that are relevant to your topic. This strategy is helpful especially if there is not enough literature relevant to your topic.