Chapter 6
Finding Resources and Doing the Literature Review

Overview

What is a literature review?
Effective searching
What makes a good source?
Types of sources and their relative strengths and weaknesses
- Online sources
- Internet sources: health warnings
Building the literature review
- Hooks
- Anecdotes
- Main concepts
- Use the original texts
Reviewing texts from a different moment in time
Help with academic writing style
- Example: how to introduce and link texts
The literature review is a key building block in the academic challenge which you mount in the whole of your dissertation

This chapter turns to researching and preparing the literature review. It explores the purpose of the literature review and gives some tips on producing a good one. This includes working with a range of sources and different ways of finding and accessing them, such as via online gateways and sources.
The chapter encourages you to critically evaluate the usefulness and reliability of sources. Next, the chapter turns to consider how to build up the literature review, providing some tips on linkages, giving the review some pace, and referring you to Chapter 12, Drawing Conclusions and Writing Up, for further thoughts about grammar and English for academic purposes.

What Is a Literature Review?

The literature review in undergraduate dissertations, like postgraduate ones, will deserve its own dedicated chapter. A second kind of literature review will also be done for the methods section of the dissertation, which again will also have its own dedicated chapter. In order to complete your dissertation you may feel as though in effect, you have to do two literature reviews: one for the substantive area of inquiry, and a second one, albeit shorter, for methods! This chapter considers the main literature review.

A literature review:

- Aims to critically evaluate the literature and build on what has gone before
- Brings together the landmark studies with recent research
- Connects the state of the literature to your inquiry, providing an understanding of, and a basis for, your own study

Importantly, the review is not an extended discussion, in the manner of an exceptionally long essay. It is a critically engaged discussion which brings together literature including previous empirical research from different sources and times, with different approaches and findings, into an engaged whole. One key thing is to ensure that what you select for inclusion takes forwards your own line of inquiry, and that you seek to add to understanding through your critical engagement – not merely reproduce the critical understanding of others.

By the end of the literature review the reader should be able to see:

- What work other researchers have carried out and the major issues or questions which are debated within the field. You should aim to group together works which share a similar inquiry or reach similar conclusions and point up where the substantive points of disagreement and debate lie. Avoid describing each earlier work in a long list
- The ‘gap’ in knowledge and understanding which you say exists in the field and which you claim your project begins to address. This might well include something relating to methods as well – you can return to pick this up later in more depth in the methods chapter itself
- How your research question will work within that gap
- That you have a sound understanding of the area of work, and are critically engaged with its debates. That you have reasons for the selections
Finding Resources and Doing the Literature Review

which you have made, and the review as a whole is a convincing part of the argument of your dissertation as a whole.

By the time you have completed the literature review, you should be able to:

- Say which journals are key to your inquiry
- Be able to name at least some of the leading researchers in the area
- Pass comment on the most recent studies
- Have grasped the main ways in which people have gone about doing research in your field, for example, which qualitative and quantitative methods have been used.

Holding these aims in your head is vital to the success of the review. You should try to avoid a long description of the work in the field. You will see when this is happening, since you will produce a list-like chapter, rather like an annotated bibliography. Bringing texts together and analysing them in the light of your own inquiry is the second key component. This requires you to synthesise work, thus avoiding the silo approach to academic discussions, where literature is arranged in small sub-groups, each splendid and interesting, but with no overall connection.

Literature reviews are in the end individualised assemblages, unique to the question that you have posed. Once you have assembled the few key texts, you may be surprised by the range of other work which you can fruitfully bring in. But bear in mind that this is true for all of the other researchers before you. The key to your selection of their work is the relevance to your inquiry rather than the relevance to their inquiry. This can be hard to separate out at the beginning of things. Something to avoid is a critically engaged and lively review of the literature which works through the ongoing debate — yet never connects to your own. A central task is to work through the possible linkages. At the drafting stage keep a weather eye for strong links which you can return to later in the dissertation while noting weaker ones which once briefly included, can be left at the roadside.

**Remember:** You must show how your own question links into the wider literature; the literature is interesting in so far as the light it can throw upon aspects of your research problem. Not making the connections between them and your own work will lead to an extended essay. However well executed, and however much you personally learn from doing an extended essay, you will end up with a debate that you have staged from the vantage point of a watching audience. A good literature review is one in which you enter the fray, even if you do subsequently find yourself exiting ungracefully pursued by a bear.
Hide and Seek: Effective Searching

Not uncommon outcomes of first searches are:

1) Thinking, I can’t find anything much: it seems as though not that many people have researched this.

   It is unlikely that there really isn’t anything much at all that you can use. The common solution here is to work on the technique that you are using to make searches, to avoid for example:

   - An ineffective choice of key words e.g. using layperson’s language rather than concepts
   - Ineffective searching technique, e.g. using ‘and’ or ‘if’
   - Not searching in the right places, for example, relying on Google rather than using databases of learned journals
   - Finally, electronic searches are not the only way to search. Specialist archives in small, local museums and libraries for example may not be wholly online, while others may not be available to the general public and will require that you gain formal access before use

2) Thinking, there are far too many references: how can I possibly choose between them?

   This is more likely, although less likely than you may imagine. The starting point is to consider how the different works relate to your research question and their relevance in terms of approaches and findings. This involves reading purposively and sifting through a certain amount of not particularly useful stuff. Make good use of abstracts, and do be prepared to scan a lot of material.

   In terms of actually cutting down the sheer volume of digital resources which might spring up in responses to an enquiry, the common solution is to work with more advanced search features in order to search for linked words.

   Secondly, you could choose to concentrate on the classics, in the first instance, some of which will be founding works plus the key interventions, which can be added to the most recent work (including the most recent reviews of the field). Finally, you need to reconsider your research question with a view to checking that you haven’t designed a project the scope of which is still far too large.

   **Remember:** Make sure that you have included recent research papers. These are usually found in peer-reviewed academic journals. You will need to search the most recent editions of key journals in order to achieve this. In some cases you might also be able to reference conference papers, and it is worth browsing the internet to see what the latest conferences have been. It might be worth contacting conference presenters directly to request a copy of their paper if it hasn’t yet come out in
• Authoritative sources
  Identify the most frequently referenced and highly esteemed
• Up-to-date sources
  Be sure to find the most recent publications of research
  findings in academic journals
• Accurate sources
  Make sure you that you correctly record the reference: correct
  volume, issue, page numbers, and year of publication
• Confidence in your sources
  You and others should have confidence in the selection and
  coverage of sources

Figure 6.1  What Makes a Good Source?
Source: based on Race (2003: 120)

conference proceedings. Most researchers will be more than happy to
provide this – as long as you reference their work.

Types of Sources: Different Texts Do Different Things

There are several different kinds of texts which you will find useful in
preparing your literature review. It is important to recognise their
relative strengths and weaknesses; almost all of them are useful, but dif-
ferent kinds of texts can be used for different purposes ranging from their
critical and academic contribution to being sources of data in their own
right.

Task 6.1 sets out some of the different types of text which you are likely
to encounter. Complete the table, identifying the main strengths and
weaknesses of the different texts, and consider whether or not you might
be able to use them and how, for example, as an authoritative source ver-
sus an interesting set of raw data.

OnLine Sources for Rich Literature Reviews

The advent of the internet and digitalisation has brought the possi-
bilities of online materials, available 24/7 and often free or at eco-
nomic prices. Today, a series of databases have been established
which provide gateways to online resources of books and journals as
well as providing bibliographic information and the location of texts
which can then be ordered. Figure 6.2 shows just a selection of them.
### Task 6.1

#### Types of Text: Strengths, Weaknesses and Their Possible Uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Possible Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic books and journals</td>
<td>Libraries; internet databases; specialist collections</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports; informed discussion documents</td>
<td>Libraries; internet databases; specialist collections; think-tanks; charities; consultancies; third sector and public sector bodies; independent research organisations; private corporations; foundations and trusts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major government departments and agencies; public records offices; some public services; private corporations</td>
<td>Some have limited access, through government archives; full public or subscription access to digitalised online collections is now possible; the land registry (for a fee); Companies House (for a fee)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Task 6.1
(Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Possible Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restricted access public and private services</td>
<td>Health, education, criminal, vehicle and traffic data, credit and expenditure data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament and other bodies of governance papers</td>
<td>Ranges from records such as Hansard (UK government) through to regulatory bodies, quango</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs; diaries; paintings and sketches; shopping lists and bills; letters; calendars; travel accounts</td>
<td>Personal collections are sometimes available to the public; sometimes there is agreed access to the researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6.2  Online Academic Sources for Literature Reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASSIA</td>
<td>Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEI</td>
<td>British Education Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINAHL</td>
<td>Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COPAC</td>
<td>Consortium of University Research Libraries Online Public Access Catalogue gives access to catalogues of large academic libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERIC</td>
<td>Department of Education, USA, searchable database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-Net</td>
<td>H-Net Humanities and Social Sciences provides database on reviews of academic books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTUTE</td>
<td>Intute: Social Sciences provides a gateway to a vast range of high quality web resources by links as well as its own publications (previously called the Social Sciences Information Gateway, SOSIG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SciELO</td>
<td>Scientific Electronic Online: Social Sciences edition; literature from developing nations with a focus on Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociofile</td>
<td>Sociology, Anthropology, Social Work, Education, Health and Psychology journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSCI</td>
<td>Social Sciences Citation Index, lists works which cite a particular other work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theses.com</td>
<td>Index to Theses with Abstracts Accepted for Higher Degrees by the universities of Great Britain and Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>Offers a database for education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WorldCat</td>
<td>The bibliographical records of 50,000 libraries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Box 6.1  Online Sources: Secondary Survey Data

Your university library will allow you to access a series of academic databases including some of those shown in Figure 6.2 plus many others. You will need a password in order to access them – but once arranged, the databases will be free of charge to you, and you will be able to access and download materials.

In preparing your literature review it is very important that you ensure that you do find out what sources you can access locally, including specialist digitalised archives and galleries that your university may look after or have connections to.

In addition, you should be aware of the range of survey data which you will be able to access on-line. This is the case for both...
qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and will be useful in many literature reviews.

Chapter 7 looks in more detail at surveys online; see under ‘Secondary Sources: Surveys’ in the first section, ‘Quantitative Techniques’.

As well as searching journals and books, you will also want to include up-to-date research reports, and some basic data if available, for example, statistics. There are some useful sources in Appendix 1 which go beyond the usual academic sources.

Box 6.2 Internet Sources: Health Warnings?

The databases and portals shown in Figure 6.2 are of peer-reviewed publications appropriate for use in academic work. Unless the material has been through a peer-review process, there is no guarantee of its quality. However this does not mean that it is necessarily of poor quality. Task 6.1, Types of Texts: Their Strengths and Weaknesses, has allowed some discussion of the reliability of texts. Today, there are a multitude of websites which make truth claims in different ways: however, their status is contested. A good example are Wikis.

For a sceptical stance on the digital revolution, see: Keen, A. (2007), The Cult of the Amateur: How Today’s Internet is Killing Our Culture and Assaulting our Economy (London & Boston: Nicholas Brealey Publishing). The BBC Newsnight discussion about this can be accessed at:

www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/newsnight/2007/06/the_cult_of_the_amateur_by_andrew_keen_1.html. For alternative perspectives there are a host of websites and discussion groups, as well as blogs which take up Keen’s arguments. Google: ‘Keen’.

Putting the Literature Review Together

The literature review needs to engage the reader from the outset. While it necessarily uses academic language and conventions, you need to ensure that a non-specialist (although trained in academic language and conventions) can follow it. It may be tempting to write ten words where one will do, but using plain English, paying attention to grammar and
the structure of your work, and thinking about how best to convey the importance and urgency of your area are all welcome to readers of literature reviews.

**Using Hooks**

Strong hooks are attention-seeking headlines which frame the review or any particular section within it. These should not be newspaper-style sensationalism, but grounded in the research area.

- **The use of statistics is often very effective:**
  
  Over 40% of young Bangladeshi men are unemployed. The comparable unemployment rate for young White men was 12%.
  

- **Timeliness**

It is important to remind the reader why the research should be done now, and why they should therefore keep reading the review.

A spur for research into climate change, for example, was the launch of the UK’s £1bn research funds for the *Living With Environmental Change* programme in London (on 18 June 2008), the aim of which is to generate the evidence base needed to press for increased environmental controls. The evidence base needs to be generated in a ‘timely’ manner – since there is not much time left to persuade the world of the case, it is argued.

- **Relevance**


**Help with Drafting the Literature Review**

We return to writing-up later in Chapter 12, but pause here to suggest that in order to get the literature review right, you will need to be prepared to go through it several times. Unlike an essay which you will work on and then submit within a short time frame, and thus be unable to amend subsequently, you will probably find that the literature review which you initially draft will need to be amended in the light of the outcomes of the research that you subsequently conduct. While it is desirable to try to pin down as much of the review as you can early on, it is important to remain flexible, and be prepared to revisit it later. This can
feel onerous, especially if you are busy with other tasks involved in doing a dissertation, so you may instinctively be reluctant to revisit the literature review. However, you will be able to make it more stronger and persuasive after doing your empirical research.

**Remember:** An effective approach is to produce a draft literature review early on, and to aim to return to it subsequently downstream.

## Using Anecdotes

Anecdotal accounts can bring the text to life but can become wearisome if overused. Here, Steven Kern has successfully used an anecdote to introduce and communicate the bare bones of one of the world’s most complex debates:

In an autobiographical sketch Einstein recalled two incidents from his childhood that filled him with wonder about the physical world. When he was five years old his father showed him a compass. The way the needle always pointed in one direction suggested that there was ‘something deeply hidden’ in nature. Then at twelve he discovered a book on Euclidean geometry with propositions which seemed to be about a universal and homogeneous space ... These early memories embodied two opposing views about the nature of space. The traditional view was that there was one and only one space that was continuous and uniform with properties described by Euclid’s axioms and postulates. ... New ideas about the nature of space in this period challenged the popular notion that it was homogeneous and argued for its heterogeneity. (1983: 131–132)

## Building the Review: Start a Section with the Main Concepts

A core characteristic of good literature reviews is the solidity of the critically engaged discussion. The review should aim to be robust enough to withstand at least some adversarial challenges, even though it may not, at the first few attempts, be the world’s most beautiful artefact. Taking time to set up the section, beginning with the age-old task of defining the key terms, has much merit as an approach.

Take for example the extract which follows in which Margaret Ledwith starts by defining the concept of hegemony and how this can be interpreted and thus staged for her purposes, as setting up the problem of consent:

Gramsci’s analysis of the concept of hegemony is profound. Hegemony is the means by which one class assumes dominance over the masses in society. Traditional Marxism emphasised that this was achieved through coercion, the way in which the state
exercised control through the law, the police and the armed forces. Gramsci extended this understanding by identifying the way in which dominant ideology, as a form of ideological persuasion, permeates our lives through the institutions of civil society. By these means, dominant attitudes are internalised and accepted as common sense, and thereby legitimised in the minds of the people. Not only did he develop the notion of consent within a Marxist framework, but he analysed hegemony as ‘the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules’ (Gramsci, 1988: 244). Cited by (Ledwith, 2007: 121)

Find and Use the Source Texts

Do not merely accept the received view of an author’s work. Always locate and carefully read the key works yourself, and find good reviews of those texts which tease out the variety of interpretations and uses made of them over the years. Remember that uses are made of texts not of the author’s own choosing. The use of ideas is not under the control of their originator, not least, long after they are dead. Take for example certain ideas of Charles Darwin, discussed here by Derek Heather:

Indeed, insofar as the nineteenth century can be said to have transmitted any legacy regarding world citizenship it is a collection of confused ambiguities. Darwinian biology was vulgarised into the doctrine of ‘the survival of the fittest’ and so helped to propagate the concept of mankind [sic] not as potentially unified but as violently racially divided. That such an interpretation was the very reverse of Darwin’s own beliefs did not prevent the widespread acceptance of this parody. For, in his *The Descent of Man*, he had in fact written:

As man advances in civilisation ... the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts ... to all the members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him. This point being once reached, there is only an artificial barrier to prevent his sympathies extending to the men of all nations and races.

(Darwin, in Laurent, 1987, cited by Heather, 2006)

The unabridged version of the extract set in the context of the passage can be found in *The Descent of Man*, one of Project Gutenberg’s free ebooks available online at www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext00/dsemmn10.txt.
Reviewing Texts from a Different Moment in Time

A further set of issues arises with the unfolding of events including political and theoretical interventions over time, which renders texts historical artefacts embedded in their historical conjuncture. Viewing texts through the lens of history allows the benefit of hindsight to later generations but can lead reviewers to adopt something of the higher moral ground, sometimes quite rightly although equally, sometimes perhaps in a rather uncritical and unreflexive manner given the almost inevitable demise of their own thinking in due course.

The approach offered here by Eriksen in his discussion of the impact of feminism on anthropology, treads a middle, but critical, ground. He both adopts a critical stance towards the invisibility of gender issues in Malinowski’s work on the one hand, while reminding us of his contribution on the other:

Gender was for a long time relatively neglected in anthropological research, which is perhaps surprising, since gender identity may well be the most fundamental basis for personal identity. Malinowski, who has often been praised for his ethnographic detail, is now said to have neglected important women’s institutions completely and exaggerated the contribution of men to the reproduction of Trobriand society (Weiner, 1988). In many other classic studies too, social actors are more or less seen as equivalent to social men. (Eriksen, 2001: 125)

Situating Key Texts and Characters in Their Intellectual Moment

Making connections between genealogies of thought, art and cultural currents is another challenge. Here is a good example by Merlin Coverley. Coverley discusses the post-war period showing the hiatus between the end of one phase of surrealism, closed as he argues by Nadeau’s book, and the emergence of the Situationist International with the colourful character of Guy Debord, which he argues followed:

By the end of the Second World War the surrealist movement was effectively over and the publication of Maurice Nadeau’s History of Surrealism in 1944 provided its epitaph. Surrealism had failed to deliver on its ambitious promises to reform society and allow all to share in the apprehension of the marvellous that
it had revealed....Movements as diverse and ephemeral as Cobra, the Lettrist International and the Imagist Bauhaus formed a new avant-garde fuelled by new revolutionary sentiments but they were hampered both by a lack of direction and, indeed, members... it was only with the emergence of the Situationist International in 1957 that a momentum for change began to appear. From 1957 until the riots of Paris in 1968, the situationist movement, under the firm, if not tyrannical, grip of Guy Debord, produced a series of statements that defined terms such as psychogeography, the derive and detournement for the first time... (Coverley, 2006: 81–2)

There are a number of texts which can assist you with situating books and their writers in their moment (with interpretations); here are a few suggestions:

- Pampel (2000) for Marx, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel and George Herbert Mead
- Sedgwick (2007) for Melville, James, Nietzsche, Proust, and Wilde
- The ‘For Beginners’ series by Pantheon books. Includes Marx, Freud, Einstein, Darwin

Remember: If you are specifically working on an intellectual history, do ask your tutors for suggestions.

Contextualisation: Setting the (Significant) Scene

A common challenge is how to effectively introduce the main elements of the historical contexts which will frame the discussion, without devoting a lot of time to it. Large-scale, complex scenarios and situations need to be set out in order to convey their importance but usually only briefly, so that the main business can commence. The rub lies in the need to keep it brief, while demonstrating the significance of the contexts.

In the following extract, the writing style is characterised by a spare text and carefully chosen words which convey the issues with clarity. There is a judicious use of headline statistics; and the author Peter Calvocoressi sticks to a simple chronological order which allows him to set the scene of the fall of France in World War II in just one paragraph:

The French capitulation in June 1940 was psychologically, although not logistically, inescapable. The French government and some of its forces, particularly naval and air forces could have
been removed to North Africa and did start to do so. But logistics are not enough. France did not wish to fight on. It was stunned by the scale and shame of its defeat and it feared anarchy. A quarter of the entire population were refugees; close on 2 million were prisoners or missing; 300,000 had been killed or badly wounded. The government was in disarray and there were rumours of a communist seizure of power in Paris, frightful visions of a Second Commune and a repetition of the lacerations which had followed that other defeat at German hands seventy years earlier: *La Debacle.* (Calvocoressi, 1997: 95–6)

**Writing Style and the Academic Challenge:**
**How to Introduce and Link Texts**

Firstly, there are technical issues with writing styles. For example, it can be challenging to write without undue repetition of the few key phrases with which you have become most familiar. Figure 6.3 contains some suggestions for phrasing styles from the excellent website at Manchester University, the *Academic Phrasebank*, which sets out many relevant and useful examples of how to discuss literature. The website is well worth a visit before you hand in your draft literature review.

Secondly, there is an academic challenge in the literature review. Assembling a review is in effect assembling an academic argument, at the heart of which lies a challenge. In making a literature review, you are critically engaging with what has gone before, synthesising areas, challenging existing orthodoxy, seeking to extend debate, and identifying issues which you wish to pursue further. The component parts of the review must then hang together in a sustained, academically rigorous manner with a logical flow.

The dissertation as a whole is a persuasive, argumentative, exploratory narrative, and your literature review needs to pick up and connect your research question with the area of work in which it fits, while exposing the gap you seek to fill or the problem which you wish to raise. Looking forwards, your methods chapter needs to logically flow out of them both: the methods chapter takes forward the project as further defined and elucidated in the literature review. In building up your literature review, you are building up your argument for doing the dissertation in the first place, and are showing why you are doing it in the way in which you have chosen to. When working on the draft, remember this. Be clear about your reasons for selecting works, and how the critical points you make about them support your dissertation as a whole.
General descriptions of the relevant literature

A considerable amount of literature has been published on X. These studies ...
The first serious discussions and analyses of X emerged during the 1970s with ...
The generalisability of much published research on this issue is problematic.
What we know about X is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate how ...
During the past 30 years much more information has become available on ...
In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on ...
A large and growing body of literature has investigated ...

Reference to what other writers do in their text (author as subject)

Smith (2003) identifies poor food, bad housing, inadequate hygiene and large families as the major causes of ...
Rao (2003) lists three reasons why the English language has become so dominant. These are: ...
Jones (2003) provides in-depth analysis of the work of Aristotle showing its relevance to contemporary times ...
Smith (2003) draws our attention to distinctive categories of motivational beliefs often observed in ...
Smith (2003) defines evidence based medicine as the conscious, explicit and judicious use of ...
Rao (2003) highlights the need to break the link between economic growth and transport growth ...
Smith (2003) discusses the challenges and strategies for facilitating and promoting ...
Toh (2003) mentions the special situation of Singapore as an example of ...
Smith (2003) questions whether mainstream schools are the best environment for ...
Smith (2003) considers whether countries work well on cross-border issues such as ...
Smith (2003) uses examples of these various techniques as evidence that ...

Figure 6.3 Introducing and Linking Techniques: Examples from the Academic Phrasebank

Source: www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/sources.htm
Summary

- A literature review:
  - Identifies the state of research in the field
  - Provides a critical evaluation of the literature:
    - It situates the literature in its contemporary moment and shows how this affects both its production then and reading now
    - It shows how the work links to the intellectual contexts of its day and of nowadays
  - Links the literature to your research project, showing its place and potential contribution

- Searching:
  Searching is an essential task to produce a good, rich literature review. The keys to effective searching are:
  - Know where to find the sources which are best for your project
  - Understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of your sources

- Online sources:
  There is an enormous range of sources, some of which carry health warnings. Learn to use academic databases well and save yourself many hours of work.

- Build up the literature review by using:
  - Hooks
    - Anecdotes
  - Main concepts
  - The original texts

- Be critically engaged with your literature review. Remember:
  - Review texts in their historical moment
  - Situate texts in their intellectual moment
  - Contextualisation: setting the scene

- Help with academic writing style:
  There are a number of sources of help, including Chapter 12 of this book.

- The literature review is a key building block in the academic challenge which you mount in the whole of your dissertation.
Further Reading