

Why Search And Review The Literature?

Basic questions to ask are:

- 1 What research and theory is there on my topic?
- 2 What are the key sources (books, articles, reports) on my topic?
- 3 Who are the main theorists and researchers on this area?
- 4 What is the language of my topic and how is it used?
- 5 What is the history, chronological development, of the topic or problem?

Intermediate questions to ask are:

- 6 How has the topic or problem been defined?
- 7 What are the different frames of reference for researching and discussing the topic?
- 8 How has the theory been relate to practice or to empirical research?
- 9 What methodological assumptions and approaches have been used?
- 10 What key concepts, variables or factors have been identified?
- 11 What are the agreements and disagreements between theorists on my topic?

- 12 What gaps in knowledge, theory or application of a methodology are there in my topic area?

Once you begin to formulate some answers to this group of questions, you have begun your review of the literature. As you gather a better understanding of your topic you will be able to interrogate your sources to find answers to the following questions:

- 13 What inconsistencies, shortcomings of contradictions are there in our knowledge of the topic?
- 14 What evidence is lacking, inconclusive or too limited?
- 15 What alternative approaches are there for understanding the topic which have not been used?