
1

PRELIMINARIES

Key Points

- A literature review is a *re-view* of something that has already been written
 - A traditional review can vary in format and style
 - A systematic review is governed by a prescribed methodology – it is a research method and is used to address a specific research question
 - It is possible to work systematically in your literature review, but that does not mean it is a systematic review
-

What is a literature review?

This book is a guide to undertaking a literature review, in which we emphasise that the literature review can be a research method in its own right. We explain that the literature review is a written product; the format varies depending on the purpose of the review. In most instances, the review will be part of a research project and dissertation, but it can be a stand-alone review, one that is not a chapter in a research dissertation or thesis. We are interested in the process of creating a review. Much more attention has been focused on improving the quality of literature reviews, as awareness of the systematic review protocol, with a defined methodology, has raised expectations of what can be achieved by all of us when reviewing literature.

Since the promotion of systematic review as a specialist review in the fields of evidence-based practice, which uses a prescribed, systematic methodological approach, we have an alternative way to review the literature. The systematic review produces an output – for example, a statement of findings to inform policy development – that may not necessarily lead into new research.

The aim of this opening chapter is to present an overview focusing on the context of doing a literature review. We consider some scenarios when you might undertake a review of literature. There is a short discussion of the relationship between a research question and a research project. Literature review is a library or desk-based method involving the secondary analysis of explicit knowledge, so abstract concepts of explicit and tacit knowledge are explored. We critically examine the notion of

peer review and challenge the faith placed on the peer review process. The chapter closes with guidance on project planning and time management.

Why do a literature review?

As an academic task the literature review is where you show that you are both aware of and can interpret what is already known and where eventually you will be able to point out the contradictions and gaps in existing knowledge. As with any piece of research, you will have to explain why your review is important, why it is different and what it adds to knowledge. In research, we seek to be original and to make an original contribution to knowledge. In the literature review context that means creating a new dimension or fresh perspective that makes a distinct contribution. There are many reasons for carrying out a literature review, so students should ensure that they are aware of what *they* are being asked to do and ensure that their review does what is required.

Taken as its simplest, traditional form a literature review is a ‘re-viewing’ of the literature. Every student will at some point in their academic career be asked to carry out a review of the literature, usually as part of completing a research project. Sometimes the task is just to carry out a review of the literature as a dissertation in its own right. So let’s begin with definitions.

Terminology used in this book

We need to have a common language to describe the different styles of literature review. Throughout the book we have labelled our two styles of review as ‘traditional literature review’ and ‘systematic review’ to differentiate them, although in practice the boundaries can be less marked. We will examine these two styles of review and then consider the word ‘systematic’ because this notion is often misunderstood and hence misused.

Task

Look at the research method textbooks you are using and see how the term ‘literature review’ is defined.

Traditional literature review

A literature review is a written appraisal of what is already known – existing knowledge on a topic – with no prescribed methodology. Later in the book you will see that this basic model of a literature review can be complemented by a more scientifically prescribed model, the systematic review. Figure 1.1 represents the two types as ends of a continuum.

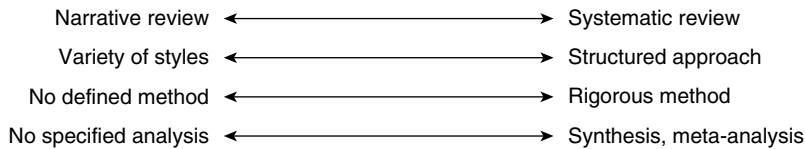


Figure 1.1 A continuum of literature review approaches

How is the literature review defined in other textbooks? The two examples which follow are taken from business research textbooks. First, Jankowitz (2005) emphasises the process of building on existing work, but with a focus on *describing* and then bringing the work together in a *critical* way. This illustrates a use of the concept or term ‘critical’.

There is little point in reinventing the wheel. Whatever your epistemology, the work that you do is not done in a vacuum, but builds on the ideas of other people who have studied the field before you. This requires you to *describe* what has been published and to marshal the information in a relevant and *critical* way. (Jankowitz, 2005: 161, emphasis added)

Writing at the same time, Blumberg et al. (2005, emphasis added) discuss the literature review and here the emphasis is on individual contribution – as interpretation: ‘An academic document which must have a logical structure, the aim and objectives and purpose need to be clear to the reader – it is an appropriate *summary* of previous work. But it needs an added dimension – your *interpretation*’.

Example 1.1 provides selected sentences from an article showing how the authors classify their review as a thematic analysis and state why it is not a systematic review.

Example 1.1

Recognising a traditional review. Extract taken from: ‘Is the increasing policy use of Impact Assessment (IA) in Europe likely to undermine efforts to achieve healthy public policy?’ (Smith et al., 2010)

This is an essay that provides a thematic analysis of literature concerning IA and associated tools and a related assessment of the European Union’s new integrated IA tool (2010: 478).

This essay takes a public health perspective in interpreting literature that critically examines Impact Assessment (IA) and related tools (namely cost–benefit analysis, CBA), which share the same basic elements as IA. This body of work is vast, divergent and largely theoretical, and *not, therefore, appropriate for a traditional systematic review.* (2010: 480, emphasis added)

Systematic review

As a contrast to a traditional review, a systematic review has been defined by Petticrew and Roberts (2006: 2) as: 'A *method* of making sense of large bodies of information, and a means to contributing to the answers to questions about what works and what does not.'

We therefore define a systematic review as a review with a clear stated purpose, a question, a defined search approach, stating inclusion and exclusion criteria, producing a qualitative appraisal of articles. Example 1.2 illustrates a systematic review.

The systematic review method is prescribed. In this book (see Chapter 7), we describe six essential stages of methodology that you should work through in undertaking a systematic review:

- 1 Define the research question.
- 2 Design the plan.
- 3 Search for literature.
- 4 Apply exclusion and inclusion criteria.
- 5 Apply quality assessment.
- 6 Synthesis.

What does systematic mean?

Now let us consider the word 'systematic'. To work systematically simply means to work in an ordered or methodical way, rather than in a haphazard or random way. So, as a researcher, you have to take a systematic approach to your learning and to your writing. But taking an ordered approach to doing your literature review does not mean that the review can be called a 'systematic review'. It is possible to claim that you have taken a systematic approach to obtaining knowledge for your literature review, but without working through the six key stages of a systematic review protocol (see below) it cannot claim to be a systematic review.

Example 1.2

Recognising a systematic review. Extract taken from 'Networking literature about determinants of network effectiveness' (Turrini et al., 2010)

Abstract

In fact literature on this topic has been highly fragmented, comprising a plurality of definitions, multiple theories, multiple methods and multiple explanations. This paper aims to review and classify previous theoretical and evidence-based studies on network effectiveness and its determinants. (2010: 528)

We want to emphasise again that the terminology of literature review is confusing and ambiguous because as a subject or research method in its own right it is still in its infancy, in comparison, say, with the volume of books on qualitative research. We might say that the debate is still at an emergent stage. It is only relatively recently that academic journals in some fields began to publish literature reviews, because the view prevailed that literature was not based on research. So you can expect to see inconsistency in the language that authors use. Without getting into too much detail at this point (because the detail is in Chapter 7), we use recently published articles to illustrate the differences in terminology between Examples 1.1 and 1.2.

Example 1.1 is a review of the policy use of Impact Assessment in Europe. There is no clue in the title that this is a literature review. The clue is in the abstract, which tells the reader this is a thematic analysis. 'Traditional' in this context is used because the authors report that they did not conduct a comprehensive search of a specific topic or question, but used an iterative approach to search. A thematic approach was taken to analyse the texts. So the process defines the type of review.

Example 1.2 is a systematic review. The example includes all the review method terminology that you will encounter in such an article, based on the use of a protocol. Do not be put off at this point. Throughout the book we explain the terminology. If you want more clarification now, take a look at the glossary.

So, there is no clue in the title or abstract of Example 1.2 that this is a systematic review, however the authors do provide a methodology section. The authors designed a four step procedure (although we recommend six steps) to review the literature:

- 1 They defined key terms (inclusion) and the studies that were not to be included (exclusion).
- 2 They used key words to identify and collect all existing studies, search bibliographic databases and follow up citations.
- 3 They screened titles and abstracts.
- 4 They reduced their data, generated categories and produced final interpretation criteria.

From these two examples you should get the idea and be aware of the difference between the two styles of review.

Different styles of review

In order to study styles and types of literature review we have been collecting examples since 2000. An interesting outcome is that it is not always clear from the title or abstract that an article is a literature review until you skim read it,

as in Example 1.1. Those articles that do classify themselves as literature reviews can use a confusing range of terminology, which in some cases is not explicitly defined by the authors in the text. The range of labels authors choose include: 'a synthesis review', 'a narrative review', 'a critical literature review', 'a critical review', 'a review of the literature', 'a review', 'a systematic review', 'a systematic review of evidence', 'a rapid review', 'an integrated review', 'a thematic review', 'a content analysis', and 'a bibliometric overview'.

Task

Take a look at any issue of the *International Journal of Management Reviews* and explore the wording of the titles. They are all reviews of one sort or another, but this is not necessarily flagged up in the title and it is not always clear until you read the abstract and the article itself what type of review it is. Example 1.3 illustrates the variety of possible review designs, the keywords emphasised in bold.

Example 1.3

Various types of review design, from the contents page of the *International Journal of Management Review* (vol. 10, issue 1, March 2008)

- The structure and evolution of the strategic management field: **a content analysis** of 26 years of strategic management research (Furrer et al., 2008).
- **Literature review** of theory and research on the psychological impact of temporary employment: towards a conceptual model (De Cuyper et al., 2008).
- **A review** of the theories of corporate social responsibility: its evolutionary path and the road ahead (Lee, 2008).

Two styles or approaches

In the following section we examine the two styles of review in more detail, with most emphasis on the traditional review.

Traditional literature review

Traditional reviews are usually critical, not purely descriptive, but there are other types of reviewing; the type (or purpose) is often indicated in the article title. The approaches most often used are listed here, and a published example of each one follows in Chapter 7.

- A *traditional review* usually adopts a *critical approach*, which might assess theories or hypotheses by critically examining the methods and results of single primary studies, with an emphasis on background and contextual material.
- A *conceptual review* aims to synthesise areas of conceptual knowledge that contribute to a better understanding of the issues.
- A *state-of-the-art review* brings readers up to date on the most recent research on the subject. This might be a seminal work, so it could be a useful beginning to your research project.
- An *expert review* is just that, written by an acknowledged expert. This may be heavily influenced by the writer's personal selection of material.
- A *scoping review* sets the scene for a future research agenda. This is comparable to what you have to do for your research project. The review documents what is already known, and then, using a critical analysis of the gaps in knowledge, it helps to refine the research questions, concepts and theories to point the way to future research. It is also used as the first step in refining the questions for a subsequent systematic review. It is our contention that you should undertake a scoping review before attempting a systematic review.

These types of traditional review are often based on a personal selection of materials because the writer believes the original authors have some important contribution to make to current knowledge. What you, as a writer of such a review, have to do is to weave those contributions together in a logical, systematic way, to develop an argument or tell a story. This approach offers the scope to be reflective, but it may produce a one-sided or even a biased argument (see Chapter 4). On the other hand, one value of traditional reviews is that they often provide insights that can be neglected or passed over in the steps towards exclusion and quality control that are required in the systematic review model. This traditional review is the style of literature review that most undergraduate and postgraduate students will be asked to do.

The systematic review

Systematic reviews are a useful tool for those seeking to promote research knowledge and put it into action. As with traditional reviews, they can help to identify gaps in knowledge as well as clarify where no further research is needed for the time being.

The appeal of this style of review lies in its claim to be a more neutral, technical process, which is rational and standardised, thereby demonstrating objectivity and a transparent process to the reader. These features sit easily in a scientific framework but less so in a more open qualitative, interpretative paradigm common in the social sciences.

So, you need to select the review approach which is most appropriate for your research.

A critical approach

One concept we have emphasised so far is that literature reviews should take a critical approach. We return to this in Chapter 4. The academic task of doing a literature review requires you to think, and to think for yourself, but to do both critically. In a popular column in the *Education* section of *The Guardian*, ‘How to be a student No 61’, Swain (2009: 12) offers a useful simplified explanation of what is required from defined critical thinking: ‘Proper thinking is about forming an argument or a critical analysis that you can back up with evidence and reinforce with appropriate examples’. Some students find developing critical thinking challenging because their education so far has been based on hearing, reading, learning and repeating in examination. Professors and teachers, and the knowledge of professors and teachers, are respected but rarely challenged. At postgraduate level, it can come as a shock to be asked to modify that reverence for current wisdom and see that ‘facts’ do not exist in themselves and that experts are not always ‘right’. This can be very demanding.

Criticism involves analysis of positive as well as negative features. It means recognising the strengths and the weaknesses of research that others have undertaken and being able to articulate why and how you think their ideas or theories might be improved. Critical thinking requires the development of a wide range of skills, but these are skills for life and hence it is worth investing time to learn them.

Knowledge and literature

Another core idea that we have used so far is that literature review is a secondary analysis technique; it is a secondary analysis of knowledge. But what do we mean by knowledge? What is knowledge? Modern technology enables us to access more information. At the same time, it has meant a wider involvement and sharing of knowledge between academics and non-academics, between readers and authors. Just think of how online encyclopaedias have changed the way knowledge is produced by experts and added to by non-experts. More and more organisations in both the public and private sector are now knowledge-based businesses. Figure 1.2 represents two types of knowledge: explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge.

Explicit knowledge is formal knowledge that has been articulated, codified and stored in an accessible format. It can be readily transmitted to others, through, for example, encyclopaedias. It is systematic and can be shared and communicated. Explicit knowledge is mostly based on empirical research findings and is in the public domain. It is the literature that you will review. Libraries are reservoirs of knowledge and information and now the internet

brings that store of knowledge to your desk. So we will all need to know how to access knowledge using modern technology and be able to judge the validity and reliability of knowledge for ourselves. Your library information manager can be really useful in helping you to navigate through the constantly evolving way that academic knowledge is managed and accessed (Wade et al., 2006).

By comparison, tacit knowledge is informal knowledge that sits in your head. It is unwritten (so no one else can access it), and often unspoken. This is a type of knowledge that we all have; it is based on our past learning from experiences, insights, intuition, observation, and it includes our beliefs, values and emotions. This is valuable knowledge that postgraduates bring to their studies which can help them take a critical approach to what is being taught.

Researchers draw on these two dimensions of knowledge through reflection and eventually interpret the work of others using their tacit knowledge reserves.

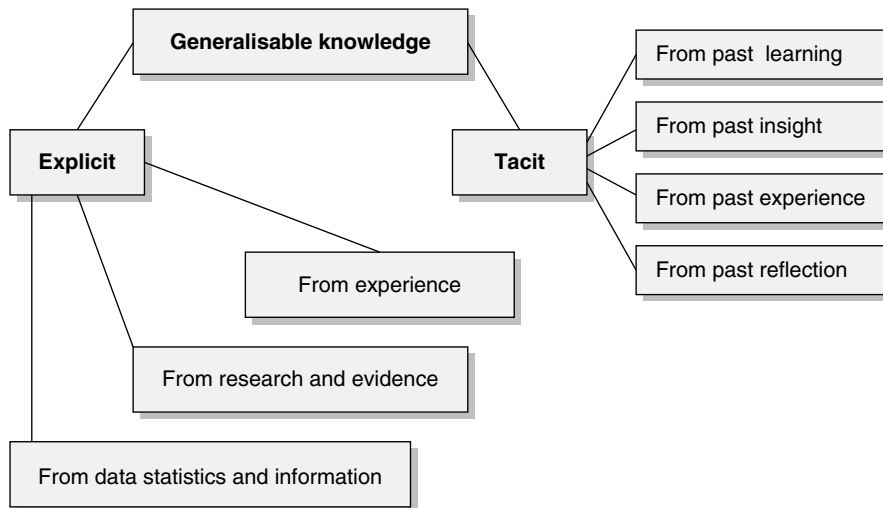


Figure 1.2 Types of knowledge – explicit and tacit

Why and when will you need to review the literature?

Literature reviews come in all shapes and formats, which we have tried to categorise as two main styles, with a subset of types, to make it simpler to understand. A literature review can have many different purposes and be written from a particular perspective. For instance, the review can be based on empirical primary research, on research methods, on theories or practical interventions, or it can be a conceptual review. It makes sense, before you start new research, to find out what other researchers have already done, because all

academic work begins by looking at what is known already. A literature review might appear as the introduction to a report of new primary research or it might be an independent, stand-alone review of a topic. The following list gives a flavour of the types of situation when a review might be needed, recognising that each institution will have its own requirements.

There are six different scenarios when reviews are undertaken:

- In a research proposal (approximately 3,000 words), where the literature review would take approximately one-third of the total word count. This is a preliminary taster of the longer review you will write in your dissertation.
- In an undergraduate or postgraduate Masters research project you might have to review two different bodies of knowledge: (a) policy or theory, and (b) existing research.
- In a doctoral dissertation.
- In a journal article publishing research findings, which begins with 'stringing' of the literature review, meaning a stringing together of published material without providing any in-depth analysis (the journal prescribes the word limit).
- In a review in its own right.
- In an evidence-based policy development document.

The purpose of the review in all but the last scenario is to provide a background to and often a rationale for further research.

The research question and the literature review

Whatever form of research you are doing – whether it is a stand-alone review or the preliminary part of a complete research project – you have to begin with a research question. The research question provides the structure for the whole of the literature review. Defining your research question is a crucial step that points the way for your research investigation. If you have no research question, you do not know where you are going and there is a risk that your research will be unfocused. Therefore, automatically, a good research question will help to keep you focused.

- The research question will guide your literature search – it leads into the relevant literature.
- If the literature review is to inform a research project, then the question will be focal for the research design.
- The research question will inform what data you need to generate, how and from where, and finally, how you analyse the data.

For some students the research question may already be pre-set by your supervisor. It may be a problem related to work experience that you would like to

pursue, but in most cases you will be expected to come up with some ideas for yourself. The best way to approach the question is to start with a general topic of interest. Explore, read widely, then select aspects of that topic that really interest you. Then focus down to formulate your research question. This will not be a simple one try and it is there. You will probably have several variations of your question. You may get ideas from reading what others have done already, since most research articles end with a sentence identifying gaps for future research.

There are standard features that your question should have:

- It must be clear: that is, it must be clear to you and your supervisor what you are asking.
- It must be doable: that means feasible, that you have the resources, the idea is not too big or vague in scope, and it is doable in the time that you have.
- It should connect with established theory and research.
- It should have the potential to make a contribution to knowledge.

Once you have formulated a draft research question, then do some preliminary searching. Find out how much literature there is and what it is saying. If your research question is too vague, it will not lead you into a coherent body of literature. Write the question down and then work through, as shown in Table 1.1.

If the research question were ‘How can we improve household waste recycling?’, the literature search has to look for examples of how we currently dispose of household waste and the problems that householders experience. On the basis of the findings, that is what is already known, you would design your research plan.

Table 1.1 Working through formulating a research question on recycling

What is the purpose of the review?		
What style of review will it be?		
Definition: How is recycling to be defined?		
Research question: What are the barriers to recycling?		
<i>Questions to ask</i>	<i>Refine the question</i>	<i>Decision to make</i>
Where, location?	Where?	Include all or narrow the scope
What sort of waste?	Food, paper, plastics, electrical goods, clothing textiles, furniture, other household goods	Just paper and plastics
Define how the recycling is to take place	Kerbside recycling, composting, black bin recycling, bins at community sites (civic amenity), charity bags, charity shops, giving things away for someone else to use	Just kerbside collection

So the final question could be: *What are the barriers to recycling household waste in the USA?*

Once you have a research question the process of review falls into place.

- 1 Formulate your draft research question.
- 2 Search for information, using key words.
- 3 Skim, scan, read, reflect and search some more, defining key concepts.
- 4 Obtain articles and read some more.
- 5 Reassess your question.
- 6 Formulate the final research question.

What is appropriate literature?

Unless your research topic is very new, it will be impossible to review every article, so you will need to select the most significant and relevant to your question. You might also need to access government or company reports, as appropriate to your topic. There are topics where you may need to be more adventurous in your choice of material, maybe looking at the work of different academic disciplines, because some of the best advances in knowledge come from bringing two or more separate fields of study together to create a new perspective. A hierarchy of sources of knowledge on environmental studies and recycling, for example, might look like that shown in Figure 1.3, which lists a range of relevant environmental knowledge sources from the top peer-reviewed journals down to the special interest trade magazines.

Peer review

Many teachers advise their students to access material only from peer-reviewed and highly rated top journals, but there are some circumstances when non-academic peer-reviewed information, known as grey literature, may be needed (Wade et al., 2006). The notion of peer review is based on a belief in the reliability of the peer review process, but you should be aware that there are some limitations and drawbacks to it.

If you are looking for insights and current topical issues, you can find them in specialist practitioner trade journals, newspapers and magazines – often half- or quarter-page snippets of information – because again these are current events happening. This type of material may not be included in your final literature review, but it adds to your working background knowledge and enables you to rapidly oversee the research field, set the scene, see

who the movers and shakers are and give you ideas for new research projects. Eventually, with time, you will develop the experience and self-confidence in your own knowledge to be able to judge the quality of a source of information.

Source	Type of source	Rating
Business Strategy and Environment	Peer reviewed journal	Quality assured
Environment and Behaviour	Peer reviewed journal	Quality assured
Journal of Environmental Planning and Management;	Peer reviewed journal	Quality assured
Journal of Environmental Management	Peer reviewed journal	Quality assured
Resources, Conservation and Recycling	Peer reviewed journal	Quality assured
Chartered Institute Waste Management	Professional journal	Written articles, but not a rated journal
Journal of Waste and Resource Management Professionals	Trade journal	News and comment
Recycling Waste World Recyclingwasteworld.co.uk	Weekly trade magazine	News and comment
MRW MRW.co.uk	Trade magazine	News and comment
Letsrecycle.com	Blog	News and comment
Environwise	Weekly newsletter	News and comment
Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee	Newsletter	News and comment

Figure 1.3 Potential sources of knowledge in environmental studies

When we submit work to an academic journal it is sent out to two or three appropriate reviewers, who assess the quality of the work and its contribution to knowledge. This is a helpful process because reviewers usually suggest ways in which the paper can be improved or where points need to be clarified.

The downside of peer review is that being judged by experts who have established perspectives and paradigms can act as a barrier to publishing new and unconventional ideas. What is known as ‘group think’ or consensus among academics can arise, which can be difficult to break down. The result is that there is less likely to be what is known as a paradigm shift, or a fresh movement away from accepted thinking towards a new direction. This is one form

of what might be called publication bias, but another form of publication bias is when researchers themselves do not share their findings and ideas with the wider research community, they keep negative or uninteresting findings in their filing cabinet. The effect is to skew knowledge in favour of positive findings only, instead of having a balanced presentation. The peer review process of the past (150 years ago) tells us that Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection would not have been published if subjected to review by his peers because it challenged the current paradigm, that is, the set of beliefs most people held at that time about the theory of evolution.

When we are teaching, we say that peer-reviewed journals are the best source to use because they are peer reviewed and therefore have gone through a vetting and improvement phase. Thus quality is assured. However, sometimes that process falls down, as in the case of the famous MMR paper in *The Lancet*, which was later withdrawn by the journal (Murch et al., 2004). It is notable that poor work is less frequently challenged in non-clinical research fields and it is less likely that papers will be withdrawn after publication. The standard of journal rankings is also a benchmark against which to assess work, although the benchmarking system and listing is open to challenge.

A note on peer review and journal ratings

As academics, we are encouraged to publish our research in highly rated journals. We then pass on this advice to postgraduate and doctoral students who need to publish their work. The first point here is to understand how journals become rated. Plos Medicine Editors (2006) [Public Library of Science, an open access journal] discuss the contentious nature of the impact factor game. For those who are interested, the impact factor is calculated by the equation shown in Figure 1.4. Later, Plos Medicine Editors (2007) write that 'even though the scientific skill of peer review is ill-defined, somehow peer review has become a badge of respectability among journals'.

$\text{Journal } X\text{'s 2005 impact factor} = \frac{\text{Citations in 2005 (in journals indexed by Thompson Scientific) to all articles published by } \textit{Journal } X \text{ in 2003–4.}}{\text{Number of articles deemed to be 'citable' by Thompson Scientific that were published in } \textit{Journal } X \text{ in 2003–4.}}$ <p>Note: 'Thompson are the sole arbiter of the impact factor game.' (Plos Medicine Editors, 2006: 2).</p>

Figure 1.4 The formula for calculating an impact factor

Clearly, the impact factor depends on which journals and which article types Thompson Scientific deem as citable and the fewer the better (the lower the denominator, the higher the impact factor). A journal's impact factor can be boosted by the publication of review articles or the publication of a few highly cited research papers. But this measure does not tell you anything at all about the usefulness of any specific article in that journal, just that the balance is in favour of good articles in the opinion of reviewers and editors.

The second important point to make is that when undertaking a critical literature review we should be accessing all knowledge in all journals, regardless of impact status because our search is about knowledge. There might be an equally good paper in a lower rated journal which could not get past the strict publication criteria and the sheer volume of articles that are submitted. There is also a time factor. Sometimes a paper can take two or three years to be published in highly rated journals, so some authors deliberately seek to publish in lesser rated journals so that their work can be in the public domain. Readers have to judge the relevance and quality of the article for themselves. Only you can judge the relevance of an article to your literature review topic. In later chapters we introduce some of the standard tools which have been developed to assist in assessing quality.

Choosing which style of review: a traditional narrative review or a systematic review?

How do you know which type of review you should do? This depends on the assignment that you have been given.

The current zeitgeist in public policy and research favours systematic review over traditional review. It could be argued that the advance of online publishing has made it easier to track and obtain articles than when we had to identify them manually and send for a paper copy through interlibrary loans. The desk technology and computer software enhances the number crunching potential, thereby making it easier for reviewers to code and rank articles. This becomes almost a form of literature audit. In Chapter 7, Example 7.7 is a meta-narrative mapping systematic review which illustrates this point. It really depends on what you want from your review. Make sure that you do the right kind of review for your purpose.

The challenge to traditional review

The A-Z of Social Research (Miller and Brewer, 2003) contains a section on literature searching and systematic review, but not on traditional review.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find any written support for the traditional review against the powerful surge of the proponents of systematic review. Advocates of systematic review are dismissive of traditional reviews (sometimes labelled traditional narratives), stating that they lack transparency of method and therefore cannot be replicated (Petticrew and Roberts, 2006). But as teachers, we know that at the beginning of their research many students have not yet developed sufficient working knowledge of their topic and are therefore not ready to undertake a systematic review. Hence our motivation in writing a textbook that tries to give preference to neither one nor the other, but rather shows them as being of equal value but different or sequential processes. So our advice is, if you have time, begin by doing a traditional (scoping) review before attempting to produce a systematic review.

The main challenge to the traditional style is based on a critique of the process. Critics assert that the design and method for a traditional review is too open and flexible. One key difference is that in a traditional review there is no obligation to provide a method report; you only have to tell the reader the purpose of the review, you do not have to tell the reader how you identified sources, what you included and what you excluded and why.

Project management

Doing a literature review is time consuming. So be prepared to allocate sufficient time to do it. For any research study it is good practice to draw up a time plan. A Gantt chart is a time plan for a research project. This is a schedule of work which shows the various steps of an entire research project broken down into tasks. Figure 1.5 shows the Gantt chart of a three month long commissioned research project. The research and review phases are shaded. Planning and time management are important skills for researchers. The Gantt chart is a flexible tool because it helps you manage the process. You will find that your research will not match the time plan exactly, but it will help you to complete on time.

Finally, this introductory overview is a good place to suggest that you should set up a system for recording and storing your work. If you are working on paper, you need to establish a system for keeping your work in order. Some people prefer coloured card folders for different themes, topics or issues. In addition, the use of colour highlighter pens helps when you need to re-find sections or sentences or references in the material. Remember, you can adapt your method of data storage and analysis retrieval to suit your own learning style. If your work is stored electronically, set up a system of folders and files that enable you to work effectively.

		2009										
		Feb				March					April	
No.	ACTIVITY/TASK	2	9	16	23	2	9	16	23	30	6	13
1	Commissioning and monitoring											
a	Internal contract meetings		■									
b	Contract strategic development											
c	Scoping/negotiation with client											
d	Supervision and project management			■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
2	Conceptualisation and design											
a	Project Conceptualisation and design		■	■								
b	Focus group design		■	■								
3	Fieldwork											
a	Recruiting participants, venues				■	■						
b	Focus groups						■	■				
4	Data processing											
a	Focus group write ups						■	■	■			
5	Reporting											
a	Report writing/editing										■	
b	Client meetings/presentation										■	

Figure 1.5 The Gantt chart for a three month research project using focus groups

Summary

In this introductory chapter we have concentrated on 'knows what' rather than 'knows how'. The terminology to describe literature reviews is confusing and contradictory so we have tried to establish a common terminology as we explain the traditional literature review and the systematic review, using examples to illustrate the difference. We have labelled them as two styles of review. Within each style there are various types of review. We have told you that you should rely most on peer-reviewed academic journal articles, although there are also occasions when you may want to use information from a wider spectrum. There are flaws in the peer review system, limitations of which you should be aware. The remainder of the book is more about how to do a literature review.