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Conducting A Literature Review

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Technical Info: Accessing the library, passwords, etc.

Graduate Business Library Resources can be found here:
http://library.national.edu/subject-guides/business/business-graduate-program/journal-articles/

To log into the NAU Online Library, you will use your student portal user ID and password.

Example format: firstname.lastname@national.edu

If you don’t remember your student portal credentials, reset them here (look for the “Forgot your password link”). If you are still having problems, contact U-Services at uservices@national.edu, 1-800-548-0602.
Getting Started: Setting up a search strategy

Your literature review should be comprehensive in scope – you want to give your readers an understanding of the evolution of your topic as well as an overview of the current scholarly literature as it relates to your topic. Your literature review will be broader in scope than your actual research question – this will help you understand the issues contributing/surrounding your (more focused) research question.

Example

Let’s say you’ve decided upon the following research question:

*How new HRM trends affect the workplace?*

Before you start searching for information on your topic, you want to think about the concepts and ideas that are contained within your research question as well as those that are broadly related. Your literature review needs to demonstrate an understanding of all facets of your topic.

Someone researching our example might want to examine the following topics in support of a literature review (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Human resource trends
- Strategies and human resource management
- Leadership and goal setting and HRM
- Guided skill performance

In addition to identifying the major facets broadly related to your research topic, you need to look closely at your research question and brainstorm keywords to search in the library.

Getting Started: Setting up a search strategy (cont.)

If we look at our example question, we can break it down into potential keywords that we might use to search the library databases. Remember – the library
databases don’t work well when you type questions or long strings of words into them like you might do with Google. We need to search for only the most critical terms of our research question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World or Country</th>
<th>Human Resource</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>leaders</th>
<th>effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>HRM teams</td>
<td>leadership development</td>
<td>CEO’s</td>
<td>rates of advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>HRM teams</td>
<td>succession leadership</td>
<td>managers</td>
<td>Success of work groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows you just some of the synonyms that might be helpful to search in the library’s databases as keywords. It is important to remember that one person might write about a topic using one term (like “trends in hiring” but another author might write about the same topic using “human resource management trends.” To be thorough, you need to be exhaustive with your searches and synonyms. After an initial search you might become confident that the literature is using one term over another – but start out by being thorough.

Once you have thought about keywords and synonyms, it’s time to start searching in the library.

Using Library Databases

Graduate Business Library Resources can be found here: [http://library.national.edu/subject-guides/business/business-graduate-program/journal-articles/](http://library.national.edu/subject-guides/business/business-graduate-program/journal-articles/)

To be a thorough researcher, you will need to use multiple library databases and outside tools. The Graduate Business Library page contains a list of our business-related databases. We have tools you can use to search the databases simultaneously. If you search the databases simultaneously, you can lose some
unique features of those individual databases. Focusing on one database at a time can give you greater control over your searches.

*Tip: Keep a list of which databases you search and what search terms you use so that you don’t have to keep reinventing the wheel each time you go into the library to work on your literature review.*

Don’t forget the broader concepts related to your topic when it comes time to searching. If we think about our simple research question about new trends in HRM, for instance, we are looking at that from a human resource perspective. *You can view a comprehensive list of all databases by subject here.*

**Using the Library Databases (cont.)**

*Human Resource Management-focused databases to begin with:*
ABI Inform
Business Source Premier
Nexis Uni

*Multidisciplinary databases that include business-related materials:*
ProQuest Central
Academic Search Premier

Each database vendor has a slightly different style, here are examples on how to narrow your search by full text, scholarly/peer reviewed, and narrow the date of publication.
The advanced search options in our databases give you more flexibility for creating complex searches or searching different parts of the database. For instance, this database defaults to searching ‘Anywhere’ in the text of an article. You can change that drop down to search within article titles, or you can search for an individual author, or search within an abstract.

As you can see in the above example, I combined some of my example’s keywords using the words “AND” and “OR.” These are called boolean operators. Boolean operators (“and,” “or,” and “not”) are the tools we use to combine keywords in a database. This handout gives you more information about boolean operators and how to use them effectively.
Take advantage of the databases’ email and save functions – if you find an article that is relevant, email it to yourself immediately or save it to your desktop. Our databases also contain tools that you can use to create individual accounts that can save your searches and files for you. Zotero or other citation management tools can also help you save information you find.

Finding Additional References: Where to look

When you find an article that is interesting, make note of any vocabulary it is using that might be related to your search. Look in the text of the article but also look at the details about the article within the database. Databases assign what is called a subject term to each article included within the database. The subject terms and additional linked terms work like hashtags – if you click on a subject term in a database, you’ll be taken to every article that has been assigned that same subject term. This can help you discover similar articles. These terms can also be helpful if you’re having trouble brainstorming alternative keywords to search.

Always, always, always examine the reference lists of articles and books that you want to use in your literature review. The reference lists can point you to articles and books that can be highly relevant to your own search.
Citation Analysis

When you analyze the citation of an article, you look at how often that item has been cited by others. Looking at the number of times an article has been cited by others can help you begin to gauge the importance of what you are looking at, the impact it has had on the discipline.

There are a number of ways to get information about how often an article has been cited. The library’s databases can usually give you some initial information about how often an article has been cited.

The library’s databases can be a good place to start to see how many times an article has been cited. You should also look at Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com) to see how many times an item has been cited as it will report more information than the databases. Keep in mind that very recent publications will have been cited less times.

Other Resources to Consult: eBooks and Google Scholar

eBooks
To find eBooks related to your topic, you can use NAU’s Library catalog. The same search strategies you use to find articles can be used to locate books. Within NAU’s catalog, you can narrow your search down to only eBooks in your area.

Google Scholar
Google Scholar is another option you can use to locate scholarly publications on your topic. You can set NAU or your home library to work in conjunction with Google Scholar so that you can be connected to the full text of an article from Google if the library subscribes to it. To set up your library in Google Scholar, go to the “Settings” option at the top of the main http://scholar.google.com page. Choose “Library Links” on the left side of the settings page and choose your library
affiliations (this handout provides a visual). Remember that you can request items that you find in Google Scholar that aren’t available in our collections via Interlibrary Loan.

Additional Tips

Individual Research Consultations

You can get assistance with your literature review! If you need help brainstorming keywords, identifying relevant resources to consult, or other assistance with your research, contact the Graduate Support Librarian to set up an individual research consultation via Zoom:

Carol Roos: croos@national.edu or (612) 214-4472 or askalibrarian@national.edu

Interlibrary Loan

ILL services are available should you need access to an article or book that is unavailable via the NAU Online Library. For books: http://library.national.edu/find-books/interlibrary-loan-books/

For articles: http://library.national.edu/find-articles/interlibrary-loan/

Database Alerts

Literature reviews and other long-term research projects that span a significant length of time mean that new research might be added to our databases while you are in the process of writing your review or working on your dissertation. Our
major database vendors, Ebsco and ProQuest, both provide options for you to create individual accounts within their platforms so that you can save your searches, set up alerts to have new articles that meet your search criteria automatically emailed to you, and more. *This handout gives you an overview of how to set up accounts within each of those interfaces.*

Additional Tips (cont.)

Zotero

When you are working with large amounts of articles and need to keep track of them in an organized way, citation management tools can help you do that. Zotero is an excellent (and free) citation management tool that can assist you with keeping track of your citations and organizing them in a manner that fits your project. [More information can be found here](#).