Documenting Sources

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Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this chapter, you will be able to:

- Select a citation management system that works for you
- Record and organize relevant material in a citation management system

Overview of documenting sources

A graduate-level literature review is a significant undertaking and will require some decisions about information organization, record-keeping, and notes management. Make these decisions *before* you begin your intensive review of the literature. Some of the decisions you will need to make include things like document-naming conventions, choosing a citation management tool that fits your needs, and setting up journal alerts.

Once you have identified and located materials for your literature review, you will organize, analyze, and synthesize them as the next step in literature review process. Here are some general guidelines for how you treat the articles at this stage:

1. Skim the articles as you gather them to get an idea of the general purpose and content. Focus on the abstract, introduction, first few paragraphs, and the conclusion.
2. Record notes and impressions on the article directly in the citation management tool you choose. Record specific aspects or significant keywords of the article that are relevant to your review. General remarks, such as 'good source' or 'interesting idea,' won't help you later on.
3. Pay special attention to major trends or patterns, possible gaps in the literature, and relationships among studies, especially noting or highlighting landmark studies that led to subsequent ones in the same area.
4. Group the articles into categories or folders, such as topics and subtopics. Also group articles that you have placed within these categories chronologically. You can print out each article and organize the paper copies into categories or you take advantage of technology by using citation management software to store and organize your articles.
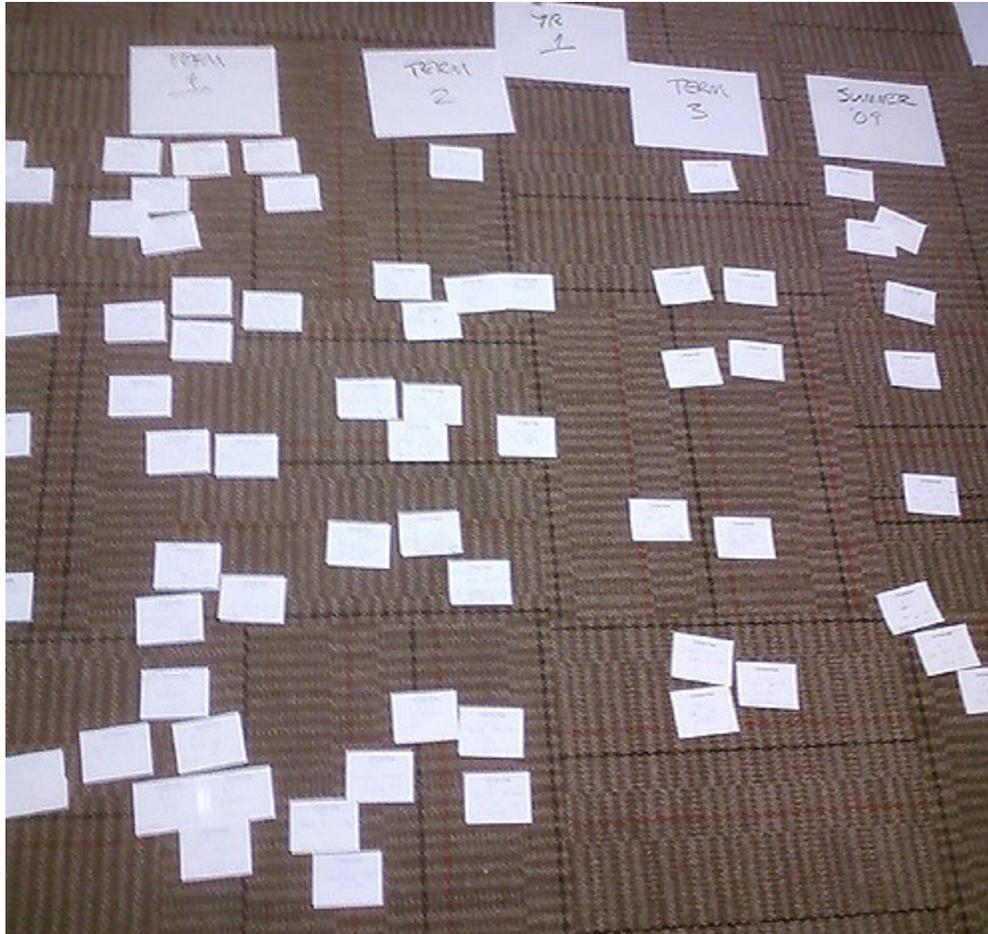
Begin to group sources into broad categories and then organize chronologically or alphabetically by author's last name. Broad general categories might include:

- Themes or Concepts
- Theories
- Policies
- Programs
- Populations
- Methodologies
- Questions for further research

Other broad organization schemes might relate to the PICO or SPICE models mentioned in Chapter 3. We will discuss organization and synthesis in more detail in Chapter 7.

5. Develop a standardized naming convention for folders and files. Names should be kept as short as possible whilst also being meaningful, concise, and standardized. For example, PolicyCttee2017 or GuidelinesRegulationsHarrison is more useful than LitReviewArticle1.

Other useful file naming conventions can be found The University of Edinburgh Records Management Office ([2017 [https://edtechbooks.org/-dPB]](https://edtechbooks.org/-dPB)). Examples include:

- [Avoid unnecessary repetition and redundancy in file names and file paths.](#)

[https://edtechbooks.org/-YYn]
- [Use capital letters to delimit words, not spaces or underscores [https://edtechbooks.org/-KKT]](https://edtechbooks.org/-KKT)
- [When including a personal name in a file name give the family name first followed by the initials. [https://edtechbooks.org/-XLF]](https://edtechbooks.org/-XLF)
- [Avoid using common words such as 'draft' or 'letter' at the start of file names, unless doing so will make it easier to retrieve the record. [https://edtechbooks.org/-BTv]](https://edtechbooks.org/-BTv)
- [Order the elements in a file name in the most appropriate way to retrieve the record. [https://edtechbooks.org/-DUs]](https://edtechbooks.org/-DUs)
- [Avoid using non-alphanumeric characters in file names. [https://edtechbooks.org/-ciM]](https://edtechbooks.org/-ciM)

Take the time to think about your organizational system before you begin researching and compiling sources in earnest. "Organizing now will save much time and heartache later." ([Machi & McEvoy, 2012, p. 31 [https://edtechbooks.org/-dPB]](https://edtechbooks.org/-dPB)).

Citation Management Tools

One of your first decisions – after selecting your topic – will be to determine which citation manager will work the best for you. Citation managers are software packages, such as EndNote or Zotero, used to create personalized databases of citations and notes. Citation management tools help users:

- import citations from databases, websites, and library catalogs
- create bibliographies
- format citations in a variety of styles such as APA, MLA, Chicago, and more
- manage, categorize, and organize citations and documents
- attach PDFs, images, and notes to citations in your collection.

While most current citation managers are generally similar, individual workflow may determine which tool to use. For example, if you will be working from multiple computers and locations, a web-based tool such as RefWorks and Mendeley will work better for you than a client-based or centrally hosted website. Other needs to consider when evaluating different citation managers:

- I need to work offline.
- I'll be doing a lot of my research on freely available websites and need to be able to save copies of webpages.
- I'm working on a group project and need to share my references with others.
- I'm not so comfortable with technology and may potentially need a lot of help with my tool.
- I will be working on a mobile device.

Tips for choosing the right tool

There are many tools to choose from and you want to experiment with a few as well as discuss with professional colleagues, fellow students, or faculty before making a final decision on which to use. Choosing a tool ultimately depends on your personal workflow preferences and your needs.

General tips for choosing the right citation management tool:

- Consult Wikipedia's detailed and updated [comparison chart [https://edtechbooks.org/-tJi]](https://edtechbooks.org/-tJi)of citation management tools to determine if any tool is clearly the best fit for you.
- Talk to people in your department. Do individuals in your discipline tend to use one tool more

often than another? Does your department or university already provide access to a specific tool?

- Talk to your subject librarian; s/he can recommend a tool based on your needs.
- Critically assess your technology skills and interests. Although all the tools advertise ease of use, there is a learning curve. Take a look at the free tutorials, help documents, and instruction manuals and rate your level of understanding and confidence.

Choose your citation management tool carefully. Try some out. Talk to colleagues. Once you've chosen a tool and started using it, changing to a different tool is problematic on several levels. If you save citations in two different products, it can be difficult to keep track of citations. Learning a new product or migrating information from one citation tool to another when you are in the middle of a project can also be difficult, time-consuming, and stressful. Choose carefully, but do choose and then stick with it.

Alerts

Alerts are an excellent way to keep up with the literature of your discipline. Alerts allow you to stay up to date with current research relevant to your topic. Once an alert is set up, you will automatically receive an email when an author's publication, keywords, affiliations, or other search criteria appear in a database. You will be able to connect to the citation, download the citation and full text (when available) from the alert, and (if relevant) save to your citation manager. Alerts are a way to save time AND stay up-to-date in your topic area.

Why use alerts?

- Do you ever feel overwhelmed by the amount of time it takes to stay aware of the latest research and trends in your discipline?
- Do you have so many articles and journals in your "to read" pile that they end up being irrelevant by the time you get to them?
- Do you have a due date for your literature review, but can't find time to check back for the latest updates on the topic?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, note that a number of database aggregators like ProQuest and EBSCO, as well as individual databases, such as ERIC and CINAHL, offer free alert services informing you of new journal issues, recently published articles related to your interests, and more. Most databases and journals use e-mail alerts to inform users of new content. Many researchers set up alerts through Google Scholar. For tips on how to set up alerts in Google Scholar, see the help page at: https://edtechbooks.org/-iz

Types of alerts

1. Table of Contents (TOC) Alerts – These alerts inform users about new journal issues. Depending on the database and your preferred method of delivery, you will receive a table of contents for the issue or links to the full-text articles. Most TOC alerts are delivered via email, but they can also be subscribed to via RSS. A directory of thousands of current and scholarly TOCs is browsable at https://edtechbooks.org/-EW. For a short 2 minute tutorial on how to set up journal alerts through PubMed, see https://edtechbooks.org/-aRw
2. Saved Searches – A saved search alert will notify you when the database identifies new articles related to a customized search. You can specify how often you would like to receive updates

(weekly, monthly, etc.).
3. Citation Alerts – These alerts will inform you when a specified article is cited in a new publication.

Within your citation manager, you can set up custom folders to not only store new articles but also to share both alerts and articles with colleagues or fellow students researching similar topics.

Bibliographic citation format

Once you begin gathering sources for your literature review, you will need to organize and document them. Citations document the source of an idea, statement, or study. A uniform citation style helps both the reader and the writer. A standardized editorial style removes the distraction and confusion of puzzling over the correct punctuation for every reference or the proper formatting for numbers and other data in text. Those elements are codified in the rules of the format style, allowing the reader to focus energy on the substance of the research, rather than how the paper is constructed.

An author writing for publication must follow the rules established by the publisher to avoid inconsistencies. Without established rules of style, each manuscript might use different spellings, notations, and citations, which would confuse and distract readers. The need for a consistent style becomes more apparent and more visible when complex material is presented, such as tables or statistics. Without standardized rules for presentation of data, the reader would spend too much time and energy looking for meaning among the structure.

Likewise, a systematic and standardized bibliographic citation format helps the writer of the literature review keep track of references as they accumulate and find them more efficiently later in the process. "You will be rewarded for your hard work, if not in heaven, then certainly when you come to write your report. You will be able to locate information easily, to regroup and reclassify evidence and to produce referenced quotations to support your arguments." (Bell, 2005, p. 74 [https://edtechbooks.org/-dPB]).

There are numerous different bibliographic citation format styles. APA (American Psychological Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), Chicago, Turabian, ACS (American Chemical Society), AMA (American Medical Association) , and IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers) are some of the more common formats in use, but there are many more. The different styles, and different versions within each style, are a source of stress for generations of students and researchers in all disciplines, including those in the health sciences and education. In the social sciences, APA style is frequently used as the default citation style. Your department or discipline may require another format and, if so, that is the one you should accustom yourself with using to document your sources.

As there are over a dozen different citation styles and different disciplines prefer different styles, always check to see if your instructor requires a particular style. Also because the rules for citation styles can change and can be extensive, it is best to refer to the official handbooks/style guides when you can. (Teaching & Learning, 2015, p. 6 [https://edtechbooks.org/-dPB]).

Whatever citation style and format you decide to use, now is the time to make that decision. Consistently documenting your sources as you read is another way to plan and organize information

as you go along, rather than at the end or in the middle.

In addition to print and online manuals detailing the specifics of each citation style, there are numerous websites and other resources that provide document citation formatting help. The Online Writing Lab (OWL) [https://edtechbooks.org/-rw] at Purdue University, for example, can answer most questions about APA, MLA, and Chicago style. University writing labs and subject specialist librarians may also help with correctly documenting sources and formatting style.

A useful open resource for graduate students in the social sciences is *Professional Writing in the Health Disciplines [https://edtechbooks.org/-bL]* by Sandra Collins (2016 [https://edtechbooks.org/-dPB]). In addition to discussing how to structure a graduate-level paper, a chapter on APA citation and reference formatting provides extensive detail on how to document sources. Additionally, *Choosing & Using Sources: A Guide to Academic Research [https://edtechbooks.org/-Wm]*(Teaching & Learning, 2015 [https://edtechbooks.org/-dPB]) provides examples and advice for documenting sources using APA style formatting.

Practice

1. Review a short introductory tutorial or brochure from each of these 4 citation management tools:
    1. EndNote [http://endnote.com/training]
    2. Mendeley [https://edtechbooks.org/-JCP]
    3. RefWorks [https://edtechbooks.org/-oC]
    4. Zotero [https://edtechbooks.org/-uqG]
2. Decide which citation management tool you are going to use and request a free trial or download/install a free version to test.
3. Using the Google Scholar Alerts [https://edtechbooks.org/-fHH], set up one or more alerts related to your topic.

Test Yourself

Question 1

Choose a good folder and file naming convention:

a. MyLitReview/Miscellaneous1
b. RandomTheories/Supporting
c. Guidelines/State
d. Regulations/OtherStuff

Question 2

The advantage of choosing and using a citation management program is:

a. import citations from databases, websites and library catalogs with a few clicks
b. create bibliographies in APA style
c. format citations in APA style
d. manage, categorize and organize citations
e. attach PDFs, images and other files to citations

f. add notes, highlight text, share with colleagues

Question 3

In APA style documentation, what is the correct in-text, parenthetical format for a direct quotation?

a. (Barrett, 1991, p. 17)
b. (Barrett, p. 17, 1991)
c. (Barrett : 17)
d. (M.P. Barrett [1991]: 17)

Question 4

For journal articles included in the References list, does citation 1 or citation 2 use the correct APA format style:

a. Poortman, Ann-Rigt. "How Work Affects Divorce: The Mediating Role of Financial and Time Pressures." *Journal of Family Issues* 26.2 (2005): 168-180.
b. Poortman, A. (2005). How work affects divorce: The mediating role of financial and time pressures. Journal of Family Issues 26(2), 168-180.

QUESTION 5

Select the answer that best describes the function of the reference page:

a. Sources cited in the paper must appear on the reference page in alphabetical order.
b. Books and articles read, but not cited in the paper, should be included on the reference page.
c. Videos and blogs should be cited in the paper, but not included on the reference page.
d. Sources listed on the reference page do not need to be cited within the paper.
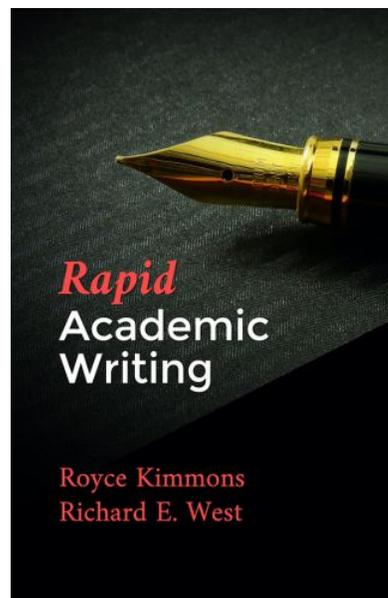
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Kimmons & R. E. West (Eds.), *Rapid Academic Writing*. EdTech Books.
https://edtechbooks.org/rapidwriting/lit_rev_documenting_sources