Structuring your literature review

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This workshop:

- The structure of your lit. review
  - Elements of the introduction
  - Possible conceptual frameworks for the body
  - Organising the literature
  - The process of making your literature tell the story leading to your study
  - Elements of the conclusion
- Common mistakes and traps
Where it fits into the story of your research:

- My research question
- What the answers mean
- The answers I found
- What I did to find answers
- What we already know about this
But…

The literature will be used *throughout* your thesis, particularly:

- in providing a rationale for the study in the introduction
- in justifying your methodology
- in linking your discussion back to past research.

Further…

- the section you call your ‘lit. review’ may not be 1 chapter – it could be 2 chapters or more.
- it may not be a discrete chapter, but distributed among other thematically-based chapters.
Structure of the literature review

- **Introduce the problem and context**
- **Highlight the development of major concepts, influential studies etc.**
  Focus on areas of agreement, modification of design, tensions and inadequacies, narrowing the focus to studies closest to your own
- **Identify the GAP where your research fits**
- **Sum up and link to your research**
Why is the gap important?
Introduction

➢ Situate your research within a general context in the literature by defining and identifying the general topic or issue.

➢ *Generally* point out:
  ▪ gaps in the literature
  ▪ trends
  ▪ themes
  ▪ areas of dissent or controversy

➢ Outline the organisation of the body of the literature review, and maybe indicate the scope.
Introduction activity:

Look at the sample lit. review introduction and identify where the text:

- gives the general context
- identifies the context in a more specific way
- generally identifies some gaps in understanding
- reminds the reader of the central focus of the lit. review
- identifies the scope of the lit. review.
2.1 Introduction

The current and developing changes in purpose, epistemologies, methodologies and literacies of the higher degree by research (HDR) have their roots in massive changes in operations and perceived functions. Along with the many debates around the nature of general changes in universities there has also been some engagement with the effects of these changes in the characteristics of awards generally, including the HDR, and the doctoral degree specifically. Doctoral study needs to be seen in light of Barnett’s (2000) general recasting of the university as being engulfed in unremitting multiple frames of understanding which he calls supercomplexity, making reframing research critical (Maxwell, 2002). It has also moved from ‘an elite but peripheral role, to occupy a more visible position’ (Neumann, 2002, p. 167), and although the message is clear that universities need to adapt to ensure their survival, it is also clear that we need to fully understand in what ways the doctoral degrees may be evolving to ensure their survival. As an important element of universities, there is a need to identify the impact of the changing political economy on doctoral degrees in terms of institutional and government policy, doctoral candidates, supervisors and examiners.

This chapter begins by briefly describing the history, definitions and values of the doctoral degree before providing a critical review of the literature, identifying and analysing current knowledge and understanding surrounding the research focus of traditional, practice-based and professional doctoral study. New forms of knowledge and innovations in doctoral degrees are discussed followed by issues in doctoral practice. Where salient, comparisons will be made between doctoral programs in Australia and elsewhere, although discussion is mainly focused on the situation in Australia.
Lit. Review body

From chaotic...

...to organised
Paragraph 1

Jones (2003) argues that.................................................................................................................................
...................................................................................................................................................... etc.

He also states that......................................................................................................................................................

However, he believes that ......................................................................................................................................................

Paragraph 2

In a recent article, Yang (2009) outlined a new method of .................................................................

and found...................................................................................................................................................... etc.

She also found...................................................................................................................................................... etc.

Paragraph 3

Smith (2007) argues that......................................................................................................................................................

She also states that...................................................................................................................................................... etc.

and that...................................................................................................................................................... etc.

Paragraph 4

Davis (2005) experimented with.................................................................................................................................

and found...................................................................................................................................................... etc.

... He also found that......................................................................................................................................................
Possible structures for the lit. review body

- **Topics**
- **Theories**
- **Methodologies**
- **Chronological**
- **Themes or concepts (the most common)**

Remember: show the relevance of the literature to your research.
Simple literature review using two topics:

Research topic: Forecasting urban residential water demand

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 End Use Models

2.2 Residential Water Demand Models

2.3 Summary

Source:
Chronological literature review example:

Research topic:
Macroeconomic reform of the building and development process: The development and outcomes of building regulation reform in Australia 1990-2003

CHAPTER 2

BUILDING REGULATION: AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.0 Constitutional setting
2.1 Basic concepts underlying building regulation
2.2 Antecedents of building regulation in English law
2.3 Building regulation in Australia: Settlement to federation
2.4 Development of building regulation in post-federation NSW and Victoria
2.5 Development of building regulation after World War II

Source:
Literature review organised around theories

Research topic: ‘One fundamental value’: Work for the Dole participants’ views about mutual obligation

2 From entitlement to contract: Theories of conditional income support

- Citizenship and welfare rights
- Market liberalism
- New paternalism
- Communitarianism
- ‘The Third Way’
- Policy change

3 The debate over mutual obligation and Work for the Dole

- The Job Network
- Mutual obligation and Work for the Dole
- Rationales for mutual obligation
- Critiques of mutual obligation
- Community views about unemployment
- Community views about mutual obligation

Source:
Literature review organised around methodologies:

Research topic: The effectiveness of interventions in children with ADHD

Chapter 2  -  Literature Review

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**Literature review organised around themes:**

**Research topic:** The role of Information and Communication Technologies in Knowledge Management: From Enabler to Facilitator

**CHAPTER 2 Literature Review**

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Source:
You’re building an argument for your study

Major sections (eg major topics, methodologies, theoretical perspectives, etc.)
Each has its own conceptual themes and narrows to show where your study fits.

Conceptual themes narrowing to show where your study fits.
Conclusion or summary

- Summarise the major contributions
- Point out inconsistencies and gaps
- Relate to your research question or problem
- Move the reader to the next section
Conclusion or summary (cont.)

Look at the sample lit. review summary and identify where the text shows:

- major contributions of significant research
- gaps in the literature
- how these gaps will be filled with the current study
- how the reader is being moved forward.
2.14 Summary

The field of information retrieval is both vast and varied with a great number of significant contributions in recent years. Such advances can be found in fundamental principles, such as the similarity metrics used and interesting search system augmentations, such as query difficulty prediction algorithms and prior-based result enhancement. Improvements in disk capacities process and the vast quantities of data that are becoming available have contributed to these advances. However, these factors also continue to drive the demand for faster and more accurate search.

... ... ....

As the scale of collections grow, demands for access to disk based inverted lists, vocabulary and document mapping table entries, and collection files also increases. Previous caching techniques have focused on the caching of inverted lists and result sets, but have not considered other data structures. Index organisations that allow dynamic query time pruning have the potential to further improve inverted list caching, yet to date have not considered the history of queries that users pose to the search system. Similarly, while the most successful techniques to predict query difficulty have relied on the relationship between the query and the collection, they have yet to consider past queries.

In subsequent chapters we build upon the background work presented in this chapter. We examine the repetition in query logs and propose techniques to reorganise the index for more efficient query evaluation. In this regard we explore query evaluation optimisation techniques such as static and dynamic list pruning, index compression and collection reordering. Continuing our exploration of search engine efficiency techniques we explore the effects of search engine caching and propose a model to measure the impact of differing caching techniques at search time using real query logs and collections. Finally, we derive information from query logs for use as external evidence and consider this first, as a form of document prior and second, for the task of difficulty prediction.
Common mistakes:

- Writing a summary of each article one by one, paragraph, by paragraph, without integrating the material.

- Writing a whole history of this field, rather than identifying the major issues/debates.

- Not having a clearly thought-out structure that leads to identifying where your study fits into the literature.
Other traps:

- **Trying to read everything**
  
  You could read forever. You need to **select** the most useful and relevant research for your specific topic area and to highlight the major issues.

- **Reading but not writing**
  
  Reading more is often an excuse to avoid writing. Map out the areas you need to cover and try to write these as you go so it doesn’t become too overwhelming a task.

- **Not keeping adequate bibliographical information**
  
  This can be a very time-consuming mistake! You **must** write down the bibliographic details you’ll need for your reference list **every** time you photocopy from a book or journal, print from the internet or write notes from a text. It could take you a long time to track down the source.
Any questions??