Literature Review Matrix

Literature reviews survey and discuss the current published literature on a particular topic. This process involves examining what has already been written on the topic to situate your research within the context of that scholarly conversation. Sometimes there is quite a bit of published literature to sift through, which can be a daunting task. A Literature Review Matrix (LRM) is a tool that helps researchers collect and array relevant sources of information. Organizing sources in a table, with summaries and commentary, allows you to focus your literature search and gain new perspectives on your subject.

One way to organize an LRM is according to a THEY SAY / I SAY model. In the THEY SAY section, you summarize what the authors of the article say. In the I SAY section, you provide your own thoughts about the value of the research. The LRM collects at-a-glance information about the literature you've found and juxtaposes similarities and differences from multiple sources. Ultimately, the LRM will help you summarize, synthesize, and evaluate information in the literature review section of your final research paper. For more information on how to write a literature review—including definitions of summary, synthesis, and evaluation—please see our Literature Review handout.

Stating Your Topic and Research Question

A good place to start is simply by stating your topic. What is your interest in this topic, and what is the significance of studying it? Make sure you choose a topic that you care about. Think about what you want to learn from your research. This will help you formulate your research question, which should be open-ended yet focused. For more information on developing a research question, please see our Research Questions handout.

The next step is to start searching for relevant scholarly/peer-reviewed sources using the library's databases or other pertinent sites like Google Scholar. If you have trouble locating appropriate materials, don't hesitate to set up a research consultation with the liaison librarian for your department. You can find your librarian by going to the Find Your Librarian page on the King Library website. When searching for sources, think about what information will help you best answer your research question. When you find an appropriate source, put it in the LRM, providing details about authors, main ideas, methods, theories, results, analyses, assumptions, and conclusions. Be sure to include both summaries of the articles' main ideas as well as your own thoughts and takeaways. Consider the LRM Template below, but be aware that you can modify the template in whatever way works best for you and your research.

Topic: Here you can define your topic and say why it's important to study.
Research Question / Statement of Research: Here you can state your research question or what your research aims to discover.

THEY SAY						I SAY		
Author/ Date	Main Idea(s)	Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework	Methods	Results & Analysis	Conclusions	Comments (Your Analysis)	Future Research Implications	Professional Practices Implications

Choosing Your Column Headings

Your column headings may differ depending on what type of research you're doing and what information you're looking for. There is no right way to do it. You should populate the LRM according to the information that will be most useful *to you*. Below is the first row of an LRM with different headings.

Author/ Date	Main Idea — Few words	Problems Identified	Solutions Identified	Conclusions	Comments (Your Analysis)

Activity

Look up the following article on the King Library website:

Tufecki, Zeynep. "'Not This One': Social Movements, the Attention Economy, and Microcelebrity Networked Activism." *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 57. no. 7, 2013, pp. 848–870, https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213479369

Read through the abstract and quickly skim the article. You might read the introduction, notice the article's headings, and then read the conclusion. As you go, jot down the main ideas and key takeaways. Notice the keywords associated with the article. Keywords may be helpful as you continue to search for literature. For the purposes of this exercise, it's okay to skim the text, but for your LRM you should read your source articles carefully (though skimming may certainly still be involved!). Now, compare your notes to the sample LRM entry below.

Author/ Date	Main Idea(s)	Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework	Methods	Results & Analysis	Conclusions	Comments (Your Analysis)	Future Research Implications	Professional Practices Implications
Tufecki, Z. (2013)	To investigate the information activities of networked microcelebrity activists in authoritarian states.	Mass media no longer controls the message or holds a monopoly on communication; activists can use social media to amplify their ideas.	Case studies of activists' Twitter use and other methods of activism are evaluated via theoretical concepts	Attention is a key resource of social movements, and some activists may use social media to share their political and personal selves to garner public attention to their causes.	Networked micro celebrity activists can use testimony, advocacy, and citizen journalism to vie for attention as mass media loses its monopoly on attention.	In repressive regimes, activists can use social media to disrupt the usual flow of information from major news outlets such as newspapers and TV. They garner attention. Some activists can achieve a level of fame and a high number of followers. This provides a level of power.	Further case studies, perhaps in the US, would inform perceptions of attention and the role it plays in information flow and the prevalence of misinformation. Celebrity micro activists in the US would also merit study.	Libraries can utilize understanding of the concept of attention and activists' use of Twitter in learning programs devoted to information and misinformation. Citizen journalism is also a topic that might be addressed at libraries through programming.

Look up and skim the two related articles below.

Cooke, Nicole. "Posttruth, Truthiness, and Alternative Facts: Information Behavior and Critical Information Consumption for a New Age." *The Library Quarterly*, vol. 87, no. 3. July 2013, pp. 211–221, https://doi.org/10.1086/692298

Pang, Natalie, and Debbie Pei Chin Goh. "Are We All Here for the Same Purpose? Social Media and Individualized Collective Action." *Online Information Review*, vol. 40. no. 4, 2016, pp. 544–559, https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-10-2015-0337

Once you have your notes on these articles, compare them to the entries in this [Example LRM](#). Here is an [LRM Template](#) you can use when you are ready to start. Happy researching!

References

Brandeis University Writing Center. "The Matrix Method for Literature Reviews." *Brandeis University*, no date, https://www.brandeis.edu/writing-program/resources/students/handouts/matrix-method-for-literature-reviews-handout.pdf

Duquesne University. "Matrix Method for Literature Review." *Duquesne University*, 29 Jan. 2025, https://guides.library.duq.edu/matrix

Sharif, Marilyn. "Re-envisioning the Annotated Bibliography Assignment." *Learning in a Digital World*, vol. 9, 2017, https://doi.org/10.13021/G8itlcp.9.2017.1834

Stephens, Michael. "Literature Review Matrix." *INFO 200 – Information Communities: Creating, Sharing & Using Information, San Jose State University*, no date, https://infocom.hyperlib.sjsu.edu/assignments/literature-review-matrix/