Hey, Hi. Welcome to today's webinar, part of our advancing your research webinar series.

Today's topic is Preparing a Literature Review in the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

My name is Kelsey Cheshire.

I am a Behavioral and Social Sciences Librarian at Cabell Library.

I work specifically with our school of Social Work as well as our Department of Sociology.

My name is Sergio Chaparro,

and I am also a Behavioral and Social Sciences Librarian here.

I work with the School of Education, the department of Psychology, and Addiction Studies.

We have a large group of attendees today.

So let me note that there is going to be time at the end for us to take your questions.

We will also have someone monitoring that chat box.

So feel free to chat us your questions.

You'll find that chat button near the bottom of your screen and most likely, it will open on the right side of your screen.

With that said, let's start.

Now, if you're interested in learning more about literature reviews, we tend to assume it's because it can be a really daunting task.

In some ways, your literature review can make or break your research, especially when someone is reading what you wrote.

We always worry that they're going to think like, "Wow, how did that person not know about this study from five years ago or it's interesting that they didn't cover this theory when they introduced that concept."
So with this webinar,
we have a few goals to help you overcome
those inevitable anxieties before
your next research project by showing you some helpful tips and tricks,
especially for conducting literature reviews in the Behavioral and Social Sciences.
So here are our goals for today.
We want to give you a better understanding of how to
find relevant resources based on your research question.
As you'll learn, this will likely mean more than just your scholarly articles.
You may end up getting some great literature or reference books.
Also, we are going to show you how to apply strategies when it comes to identifying,
retrieving, and synthesizing everything you find during your literature review.
Most importantly, we want to make sure that this is
a productive and efficient process for you.
Lastly, we want to discuss how to digest these resources and
findings so that you can effectively connect
the dots and have a cohesive literature review.
As you can see by our image,
it's ultimately about establishing
good habits which will make everything easier down the line.
But first, let's just start by discussing the concept of the literature review.
A literature review is that support and the pillar of your research paper, essay, thesis.
What I mean is, it basically examines, discusses,
and ponders on the state of the research literature pertaining your topic.
I said topic because at this point,
you should have a theme or an idea of a topic,
what is that you are investigating about?

However, and let me tell you,

this happens very often.

This may be shaped and influenced by your literature review.

The analysis of the literature is important because in

social sciences and scientifically in general.

Actually, in any research enterprise,

you'll work on the steps of others.

You are never alone.

That is why, let's remember that a literature review helps you deal with many things.

First of all, understand what has been researched about a topic or problem.

Understand what has not been researched about a topic or problem.

Also understand what kind of research could be expanded about a topic or problem. Not little things.

This knowledge is important because maybe your topic has been discussed already and investigated thoroughly,

yet an exploration of the literature helps you come up with new ways of researching and new ideas when investigating.

In the same way, you may find in the course of your literature review that there are areas of research that have not been discussed or address by [inaudible 00:04:21].

Do you know how we call them?

We call them gaps in the research.

Think about the literature review also as an opportunity to become acquainted and knowledgeable about a topic.

Thinks a good and solid and consistent explorations of the literature should increase your knowledge and
connect you with what the expert on that topic say.

So we have discussed what is a literature review.

Maybe now, it's relevant to specify what is not a literature review.

So you can get a better idea of this.

A literature review is not a summary of the literature.

We don't need you to do that.

Now we have artificial intelligence software doing that.

A literature review is not just a list of commentaries about the literature.

Literature review is not a disconnect overview of scholarly peer review research, and notice the word disconnected here.

Do you notice how I use the phrases not a summary, not a list, not disconnected?

It is because a literature review is supposed to persuade and convince your reader about the importance of your topic and interest in the research.

Please never forget that you are building a literature review for a reader.

I myself, literature reviews has persuasive arguments about, what do we know about these and why is this important to investigate?

Why is this relevant?

These goes beyond retrieving articles from a database, reading them, summarize their strengths and weaknesses, and writing about them on your document.

You are actually explaining, exposing, and updating the reader on the literature in order to propose and sustain a topic or idea for research in further research.

Some of the best literature review I have ever read where very clear evaluations and
clear and persuasive evaluations about what's going on regarding this topic.

There is a contextual factor that you have
to keep in mind here, and you should know this.

Science, behavioral or social sciences.

Science is a network.

Okay, this is what I'm trying to tell you, science is a network.

It is a very, very collaborative enterprise.

The scholarship is a constant conversation among those in the network through.
This conversation is about among other things,
the literature they produce.

Keep this in mind to understand also why
a literature review is so relevant to any scientific and research work.

These are the pillars of the cathedral or the building.

These also explains why in the Social and Behavioral Sciences,
we have specific databases to explore for a literature review since
every knowledge area speaks and dialogues differently about its research.

Also, there are different kinds of literature reviews.

In this webinar, we'll explore the general kind but you should
know that for example in biomedical sciences,
we have systematically reviews,
which take months of planning and searching and researching.

They have very explicit parameters and
very clear planning methods and a thorough organization.

Their scope consists of thousands of articles and studies in for example,
medicine or a specific medical field or sub-field,
and they usually involve a team of people and their results are
standardized and published in platforms like concrete systematic reviews.
We have academic librarians at TML that devote a great deal of time supporting these massive enterprises of knowledge. Now, as some of our research guides suggest, trying to figure out what do we know or not about a particular issue, topic or subject, involves also various skills. What are the skills? What is something that you need to develop? Well, first of all, the first skill is the effectiveness of your search for information. How good are you at searching for information? Why did you use the wrong term and you spend five hours on this for nothing? The quality and reliability of the sources you choose. Are you searching in the right database? Are you Googling? I hope not. Your ability to synthesize also the sources you select. These are skills that you learn and train yourself in. Like, let me tell you, nobody is born knowing how to write a literature review. Seriously, like it takes effort and time and the more experience you become searching, assessing or evaluating your resources and synthesizing, the better your literature review will be. What I'm trying to tell you is that this is a cognitive process that matures in you as you become more acquainted with the literature. Now, talking about searching skills. Imagine that you need to update somebody on what is that we know about magnet schools in the education field. A simple search about magnet schools on the screen, shows you that. But seriously like, are you going to read
1,543 articles on magnet schools to figure out what is going on?

Some of you may be thinking that then,

how is possible all of a sudden to gain expertise on something?

Bad news, is not possible to do it all of a sudden especially if you do not refine

your topic enough and it becomes too broad when executing searches [inaudible 00:10:48].

That is why choosing a topic and then narrowing enough to be manageable,

is one of the first steps.

Let me be very clear about this.

You can just say my literature review is on magnet schools.

I want to investigate magnet schools.

Maybe you are really interested in

how a student performance on mathematics testing performs at magnet schools.

As you can see, this is more manageable.

Kelsey will discuss how we narrow our topics in a minute.

Searching for this information,

particularly scholarly peer-reviewed information,

involves identifying for example,

what are the best databases for your searches.

Evaluating the quality and reliability of the sources you choose,

requires for you to read them thoroughly.

I mean it. Read them.

Gaining experience and paying attention to what they say,

how was there when switched on,

the sample size, the importance of the

journal you recreate the sources from, among other things.

Hopefully, all of this helps you better
understand what is meant when you hear literature review, particularly in the behavioral and social sciences.

Now, as you might imagine, your literature review is going to be an iterative process. You're going to be repeating several processes to make it the best review that you can.

One action affects subsequent actions throughout the entire process, and luckily, there are multiple opportunities for feedback and tweaking along the way.

So let's talk about this first step of our lit review, which is defining your research question. If there's anything that I've learned along the way, it is at this tends to be the hardest part for new researchers. So let me start by giving a few suggestions. First off, make sure you're interested in your topic. That may seem obvious to some of us. But for others, just know that you will be reading a lot on this topic and you want to make sure that you can enjoy reading those scholarly articles as much as possible. There is a limit to everything but keep that in mind. Next, you're going to be finding the perfect balance between not having too broad of a focus, but also not too narrow of a focus. It's a real Goldilocks and three bears situation. So this porridge is too hot and this topic is too broad, or this one is too cold and narrow. You want to find what's right. A broad topic is going to quickly make you realize that there isn't
enough time to possibly cover everything that needs to be said in an appropriate fashion.

But that balancing act comes in again if you realize that your topic is too narrow and you're struggling to find relevant literature necessary to flesh out your review. So just a warning though, just because you're not finding what you need, it doesn't necessarily mean that you need to change your topic or that it's too narrow.

That's a good time to get feedback from a librarian to make sure that you're searching the right words in the right places. So for example, let's imagine that you're a social worker who's exploring policy research on learning disabilities. You then choose a setting. So now you're looking at educational policies that affect students with learning disabilities.

Well, you might also want to narrow your research question to focus on a particular learning disability, let's say dyslexia, and what age group are you're interested in.

Another way you might narrow your focus is to choose a particular state like Virginia. So we're looking at the demographics and we've now gone from what seemed like a good research question to something that is much more focused and suitable for research. So now, our social worker has a good idea of what they are wanting to know and even where that information might come from. Because they know they're going to have to research legislation in Virginia but also maybe other states to see what's out there that lawmakers here could introduce.

They're going to need the latest research about how dyslexia affects individuals,
particularly of a certain age. That could come from psychological or sociological research, but then they also need educational research on how to best assist those individuals during the learning process. So now that social worker has a better idea even of the scope of their lit review and how it might play out. Let's be honest, what you end up finding in the body of literature it may expand your interest or change the nature of your research question, you might gain new insights that lead to a more complex question or even an entirely new direction altogether. But that's okay, it happens to the best of us. Once you have defined your research question, you're ready to really start your lit review. You might not realize it, but the writing process actually begins here during your searching. Your knowledge of the search process, it's going to determine what you find, and what you select from the results will shape everything you write. So it's very important to approach the search process with a plan to target the types of information you need. For most assignments but also research, this means recent peer-reviewed articles. We say recent because as the evidence-based continues to grow, staying up to date is basically an ethical imperative, especially when we're talking of fields like psychology or social work. Unless your literature review needs to include seminal publications or maybe it's historical in nature,
be cautious about using outdated sources.
If for you that definition of outdated will have different contexts and can mean anything from articles published 10 years ago to only three years ago, it's up to you or your professor to define what is considered outdated.
To take a step back, the appropriate resources can also be things like reference materials. Once science has come to a consensus on a topic, that information is usually synthesized and presented in general books on the topic or encyclopedias.
Don't expect to find that necessary background information in scholarly articles very easily. Students can often think, "Well, I need to find a scholarly article that says cognitive behavioral therapy is used to treat depression."
But that is now agreed upon knowledge in the field, and you'll quickly find that stated as such in a resource like the DSM-5.
So fortunately, if you're not sure where to start when it comes to what resources you might use, the library has subject guides that lists places to find articles, background information, for a literature, much more. These are located on that yellow search box on the library's website, where you'll just click "Research Guides".
I think it's also very important to say to yourself, "What am I going to include or exclude in general?"
Having a defined selection criteria will help you narrow your focus as well. This could be as simple as saying, "Well, I'm going to only include articles written in English from the past five years."
Or it could be as complicated as,

"I only want focus group research from the past five years that studied Hispanic children in a community setting, where Bilingual research is included."

But define that selection criteria early on is important.

At this point in your lit review, you may find it helpful to discuss what you have decided so far with a professor, a colleague, or a librarian.

Someone who can give you guidance, whether with the knowledge of the current literature, or the librarians knowledge of knowing what resources exist to be used.

Getting feedback before you start searching can save you some time down the line.

Searching, the actual searching, involves retrieving information from the database itself.

But let me tell you more importantly, involves finding the right words and terms to search on each database for itself. That is, designing the right query.

Let me give you an analogy, each database is like a store. It contains a very specific kind of variety of products, and by learning about your database, what does it cover?

What's its scope?

You learn not to go to the wrong store.

We don't search databases for a literature review like speaking to Siri or Alexa, okay?

Abandon that hope.
Databases at VCU offer very specific descriptions of the scope in the entrants.
In addition, I mean the research guide, okay?
In addition, each database has an index or thesauri that allows you
to find the most relevant words to match the concepts you are searching for.
That way, your searching experience can be more efficient.
If you are interested in students accessing the class room for example,
you are better off using the precise script or
academic achievement in Education Research Complete, okay?
Because students success for this database means
also how much money he or she made after school.
So you would get too many records and you want actually to
be more precise about academic achievement within the classroom.
I hope we make clear that each database
also may have a different way of naming the concept you are looking for.
This is why it's important to learn the basics of database searching.
Most databases contain "Help",
contain their tutorials for them,
and try the advanced search features to build more precise searches.
Arming yourself with these tools makes the literature review process more robust,
more efficient, more effective in many ways.
Take advantage of the different databases tools.
For example, do you want to limit your resource for particular age group?
You can do that exact info.
Or would you like to limit to a particular methodology?
Many databases have that feature as well.
What I'm trying to ask you is take time to familiarize
yourself with the database interface before you start using it.
Also, remember that literature reviews are indexing databases.

So let me ask you,

would it ever be a bad idea to ask yourself if there is

a literature review and your topic already? I'm I right?

I mean, why reinventing the wheel?

It also probably makes sense for you to include

other literature reviews in your writing: academic search,

Datastore, PsycINFO for allowing you to search

specifically for literature reviews like Mozart databases.

There are even publications like sociology campus that just publish literature reviews.

You can search within publications for examples.

PsycINFO has an industrial literature review.

Cochrane Library available at VCU is

a database for systematic reviews on the effects of healthcare.

Finally, while searching for documents for your literature review,

the title, and the abstract,

as well as indexed terms could be your best friends forever.

Set your research to look specifically in the title or abstract for your keywords.

Searching for relevant words on the title and abstract can make

your search more precise since the abstract,

and you should know this,

is actually a very rigorous summary of what the article is about in most cases.

A good scanner of information will look for the most precise words

to search for documents at the most precise places.

The abstract is one of them.

One last piece of advice.
As you read through the literature, 
familiarize yourself also with the words, 
the authors are using to describe the topic, 
to discuss a topic, 
to analyze a topic.
Soon, you will find similar terms and semantics. 
Things are going to start sounding familiar like good shoppers. 
Good shoppers are familiar with the lexicon of the shopping process. 
You will then develop the ability to identify relevant information by searching for those words and that way, they are indexed in the database.
So a basic search plan will guide you step-by-step through the search process and enable you to make informed strategic decisions like Sergio mentioned. That includes identifying searchable concepts, selecting appropriate databases, and even evaluating your search process itself to revise it as needed.
So I recommend starting a simple Google Doc or writing it down even, but make a note of where you plan a search, what you plan to search, and then document any changes you make along the way. This not only helps you to define your search strategy, but it also helps you to keep your thought process organized. That can be really helpful, down the line, if you have any questions about how you conducted your review of a literature. Let's quickly discuss what are some appropriate databases to search. As mentioned, you are going to have
your subject specific databases like sociological abstracts for sociology or education research.

For education, Eric, somewhere in sample.

I mean, generally, the subject content will be made obvious by the name.

But you are also going to want to check out interdisciplinary databases.

Things like Academic Search Complete or world of science.

Because so much of the behavioral and social science research, and I cannot stress this enough, can have an interdisciplinary approach or wider implications for our fields.

What I'm trying to tell you is that researchers may investigate a problem from many different perspectives.

Luckily, a lot of our database vendors such as EBSCO or ProQuest, allow you to search multiple databases at once.

That feature is going to look a little different on both.

But in general, look at the top of the database's homepage to see if there is an option to change databases or to choose databases.

You will then have the option to select all or pick and choose what you think is relevant.

This is just another database feature.

You may want to explore.

On that topic of databases, in general, from the library website, you can actually limit our resources to databases by subject, which is actually very helpful if you know you are just searching for scholarly articles.

Simply click all databases on the yellow search box then scroll down to your subject on your right side of the next screen.

That will then show you only databases that are relevant to sociology, for example,
and it will also give you a brief description of the type of information included in that particular database, so that you have an idea of whether it might be relevant or not to your research question.

Okay. So at this point, let's imagine you've defined a search strategy, and you're ready to find out what you need. Whatever that may look like.

As you can see here, it's going to be a lot to manage. We've got an example of the different types of studies you might be reading, how you might have organized these studies at themes, so that you're reading them in a logical order.

But how do you realistically approach reading this much scholarly literature? There are several suggestions when it comes to digesting scholarly research. I say the following a lot but only because it is important.

You want to start by reading the abstract of the article. You can find the abstract listed on the databases' record for the article or at the very beginning of it.

But it's basically just a paragraph summarizing everything you need to know in that article like Sergio mentioned. It might tell you why their research question was important, some of their lit review, but it's also going to tell you what their methodology was, it's going to give you a concise summary of their findings, and they might even include the conclusion they came to.

So taking the time to read the abstract is definitely preferable to being
five pages into a 35-page paper and realizing it's not what you're looking for.

Once you've read that abstract and you've decided,
yes, this article is relevant to my research question.

It's time to tackle the article itself.

Articles are generally grouped into sections that you may choose to
job too or even skip based on your knowledge of the topic.

You might say, "hey,
I don't need to read the author's literature review."

So I'm going to jump ahead to their methodology and findings.

Or you might also decide,
it's not up to me to critique the rigor of their methodology,
so I just want to read their introduction and conclusion.

An undergraduate student, they may read the first few lines of the methodology section,

and come away knowing that it was a survey of 100 people,

and then they jumped to the findings,

and they learn that 20 percent agreed with
the statement that relates to what that research is about.

Suddenly, they, honestly, have the sufficient knowledge for their needs.

But on the other hand,
a doctorate student might pour over the statistical analysis,
because it's very important for their needs to
fully understand the validity of the findings.

With that being said, you are going to be the one
who determines how you read and digest the literature.

But don't let yourself become too bogged down by
the specific details of the methodology if it isn't related to what you need to know.
So in order to preserve your sanity, you're going to want to have a manageable way of documenting and organizing these findings. There's a common theme emerging that a lot of this is going to be based on your personal preferences and self organized. What I can recommend, however, is to check out the newest tools designed for this purpose. For example, you might choose to use a citation management software tool like a Zotero.

A tool like Zotero will integrate with your Internet browser, but it also allows you to quickly save the citation information of any items that are interest to you, or a list of the search results even from a database. Many of them will also automatically save the PDF of the article, if it is readily available on the web page. You can then further organize your results by creating folders within the library its generating. You can share those results with your collaborators. If that doesn't sound appealing enough, a tool like Zotero can even integrate with your Word processor, and then generate your citations in your bibliography with a single click. So if you aren't already using a citation management tool, it is definitely worth your time to investigate.

The library has guides to help you choose which citation management tools best for you, and it'll even provide basic guidance on using them. Let us promote also, taking advantage of these,
the next webinar in this series, since it relates to citation management software on March 13th at noon, the library is offering keeping track of your citation. It’s going to cover about both Zotero and Mendeley. Keep this in mind if you feel you need more of an introduction to these tools. Registration is open now on the library’s website. Perfect.

So the last recommendation is to take advantage of the Cloud when possible. You’re likely to be working on your lit review over the span of a few days, maybe in weeks, and maybe you’re even using different computers. So it can be really hard to remember to carry around a thumb drive or a stack of papers. You can also avoid disaster like having your computer crash and losing everything. Since you are a part of VCU, you can take advantage of Google Drive to save your work in the Cloud. Google Drive, again, is also great for collaboration. You’ll have shared folders, you’ll get notifications when your collaborators make changes, or add information. But if you are old school and prefer to pore over printed out papers, that is okay, maybe not to the environment, but to each their own, and maybe just wait until you find everything you need, and save it to the Cloud before you print it out and try to synthesize the literature, which, speaking of. So now you got all your articles, and it’s not time to celebrate yet. The final major schema and action of the literature review like synthesis,
needs to combine separate elements to form a whole.

I would have to form a coherent and persuasive piece of writing.

A piece of writing that as we discussed in the beginning, offers a solid ground to continue with the research.

A good literature review is the best possible solid ground for more ideas and inquiries about a topic.

Known about synthesis has to do with organizing the literature you're addressing and reading, and yes, there are multiple suggestions about how to do it, including using a synthesis matrix.

Our advice is just one, use what works the best for you.

We learn and analyze in different ways, and some of you may be more visually oriented than others.

Again, it's up to you to devise the best and most useful methods to organize the ideas you are retrieving from the literature.

Some people just prefer write notes in the margins of their papers and that is perfectly fine.

To explain it simply, a matrix is an schema from where everything starts, actually, I mean, the etymology of matrix comes from Latin, as mater, that is mother, which makes sense because your literature review is in many ways the place from where everything starts.

For the purpose of the literature review, we suggests an option to use a V2,
a visual matrix or a schema to arrange and organize the ideas from the literature. Visual aids are very helpful for the literature because they offer you perspective. How you think of a wall, it helps a lot to move away from it, and examine it from a distance to gain a much better view of the details, the same with the matrix. It helps your vision of the ideas from the literature. Arrange here metrically, it looks like a set of interconnected boxes since your ideas will be related. So a simple matrix would look like this. So you can see that the size is purposely constraint. That is fair to minimize any temptation to include too much detail. This isn't where you're writing a paper. The column names can be organized however you want, and you may even decide that some are irrelevant to you, but they should reflect what you need to extract from each source. Be sure to consider how it guides your interaction with the literature, so that you can interact with a purpose, not just copying and pasting details into the boxes. If you decide that you do want to use a matrix, you'll find more examples on our literature review guide. This is just one example of how you might decide to organize your thoughts before you write your lit review. Now, let us remind you of a very important aspect of searching for information which involves the affective or emotional aspects, and there's research about this app by the way.
One of the most common consequences of searching for information, gating frustrated by the results or the lack of them.

I mean, there's nothing about this talk, is to abandon the task for another, or to change gears too soon.

Remember also, please, please, please, that the research you are looking for simply may not exist yet.

For new comers, what I'm trying to tell you is, a literature review may look like a daunting and tremendous task, which is truer, the availability of information sources or not, and the logical and analytical aspects of retrieving, downloading, reading, organizing, and writing a literature review could be stressful and frustrating because, you know what? This is the truth, this is not how we usually discuss information outside of the academic world.

It is in many ways counter-intuitive to our everyday colloquial speech, we don't do these often.

A literature review like any systematic review of information demands us to be disciplined, organized, and methodical.

Should we add here also that need for to cite everything correctly. Did anybody say APA?

Should we and also the fact that in behavioral and social sciences, updated information is extremely important.

So what I'm trying to tell you is, remember also, I mean, literature reviews may have an expiration date.

Remember, however, when searching for information,
frustration only leads to more frustration. 

So to combat that stress, 

we suggest organizing yourself early, plan accordingly, 

remember that time is an important factor, 

and also take advantage of the tools that are available to you, 

like learning how to swim, 

at one you just need a jump into the water. 

Unfortunately, there isn't a webinar that will 
teach you everything about literature reviews. 

But the librarians at Cabell also provide 
support and guidance that can alleviate your stress. 

Please contact us. 

We are here to help. 

Unfortunately, we can't offer many suggestions for your prose 
other than explaining what the lit review synthesis might look like. 

We should mention however that the writing center on campus is a great resource 
for that. 

So we've now come to the conclusion of the webinar, 

and to wrap everything up, 

we hope this was a very helpful introduction to 
literature reviews in the behavioral and social sciences. 

As a reminder, well, 

Sergio and I are available to help you more in depth. 

You can always reach out to us by e-mail, 
to schedule research consultations. 

If you're in sociology or social work, please contact me. 

Sergio will be able to help you with education,
psychology, and addiction studies.

With that, we'll open the floor to questions from you all as well as stopping the recording.