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Doing A Literature Review: Releasing The Social Science Research Imagination (SAGE Study Skills Series)



Synopsis

'This book can provide an excellent framework for bolstering what is often an experiential process - doing a literature review. It is best seen alongside the supervisor, as a guide, through the multidimensional sea of academic literature' - British Educational Research Journal

Book Information

Series: SAGE Study Skills Series

Paperback: 230 pages

Publisher: SAGE Publications Ltd; 1 edition (March 1, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0761959750

ISBN-13: 978-0761959755

Product Dimensions: 7.6 x 0.6 x 9.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (29 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

When I purchased this book, I was looking for a potential text for a short-course on writing the dissertation I'm teaching. I really expected the standard "here's how to search through the library and databases." This is simply much more than that. It's less about how to do the review itself and more about how to think about your topic. In fact, Hart raises the questions I should have been asking myself--if only I had known--and my advisor wasn't. How much better my work would have been if I'd had an understanding of how to analyze a text from various perspectives. Many texts offer advice on how to write but few talk about how to think about your question and how to fit it within the context of work in your discipline. Hart does this.

Hart, Chris. 1998. Doing a literature review. Releasing the social science imagination. London: Sage Publications. Chris Hart's guide to doing a literature review presents a comprehensive perspective on the literature review as a research tool. While it is addressed to scholars in the social sciences, this book is useful in most areas of design research. Hart discusses the role of literature in research. He explains how reviewing earlier work releases the imagination rather than constraining it. He

shows how to classify and read research literature, how to analyze arguments, and how to organize and express ideas. He also teaches the reader useful ways to map and analyze the ideas that each body of literature reveals. Finally, he demonstrates in careful, clear stages how to develop and write the literature review. At each point, Hart develops a serious, well-reasoned explanation that helps the scholar to understand why each step is important and how to do it well. Book review published in Design Research News, Volume 6, Number 5, May 2001 ISSN 1473-3862.

I have read several books on doing literature reviews. Except for this one, they were all about the quantitative style of review called meta-analysis. This is a well-written and informative text, though it is a little too wordy for me to rate it excellent. It is the only book I could find that describes exactly how to produce the lit review section of a thesis. This is something that even books on dissertation writing tend to leave to your imagination.

Hart's material will benefit anyone who needs to develop and demonstrate their expertise on a topic. He describes how the review contributes to the defense of a research topic and its findings, at the master's and doctoral levels. He presents examples of what thesis and dissertation boards look for in research proposals and papers. The book describes techniques to extract clues about theories and methods a researcher used. Hart provides excellent guidance on how to analyze the literature on a topic, develop a map of ideas, and synthesize a new contribution. Anyone who wants to develop their skills as a researcher, or student, should definitely purchase this book. I also shared many of this book's insights with my friends, who are not researchers. Although I strongly recommend the book, I only rate it 3 stars. The book is unorganized, and the writing is poor. In an example from Chapter 4, Hart presents a table of 19 common fallacies. The first column presents the type of fallacy (in no logical or methodical order). He titles the second column "What it is and how to avoid it" but only the first entry presents any "how to avoid it" data. The remaining 18 entries have no advice on avoidance. I also felt some diagrams present no useful information; and his prose rambles and repeats itself. In short, Hart gives us dynamite information, but it is frustrating to sort through its sloppy presentation.

The book was answering my questions before I could ask them. But -- the questions were almost on the tip of my tongue. It is great to have a teaching/learning tool that covers the critical details necessary for a great literature review. The motivation helps keep the effort alive -- and the tips help to make the effort successful.

This book is great. It has all you need to complete a research paper at any level. I used it for my bachelor's project which, according to my advisor, is equivalent to a Master's thesis in content requirement. My advisor has asked me to lend him the book so he can use it to revise the current research manual supplied by the college. This book is easy to read and has a lot of useful tables and charts.

This is a short, concise text about writing a specific type of document – the scholarly literature review. The beauty of the book is that it also provides concise, easily usable breakdowns of argument analysis and idea mapping that apply across disciplines. Although the book claims to be for graduate students, it's well-suited to my undergraduate advanced writing class and affordable enough that I felt OK assigning it for just one major project. Students are already using the argument analysis section in other assignments.

A brilliant book written in such a wonderful, transparent and understandable style. A real gem that is best in its class. Excellent reference when judging graduate and post-graduate thesis works. Shows that this is one of the hearts in research process and sadly, today, present less and less in proper form, content and execution! Recommended warmly! PS With all due respect to those that have written negative reviews - seems they have reviews the wrong book or simply have no clue whatsoever about doing research in social sciences.

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