

# Literature Reviews as Inspiration for Teaching and Research

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What brought you here today?

“Faculty vitality doesn’t come from doing more — it comes from reconnecting to questions that matter.”

# Goals for Today

- Explore some reasons for doing literature reviews
- Discover the 12 flavor profiles of literature reviews
- Examine some new approaches
- Review AI-based tools to increase efficiency
- Identify Northwestern Librarians who can partner with you

# Questions that Motivate & Energize

1. What question about language instruction has remained with you even when you haven't had time to pursue it?
2. What professional reading has energized you lately?
3. What conversation do you wish that the field of language instruction was having right now?

# Some Purposes of Literature Reviews

- **Feed** your **curiosity**
- **Dig** into a teaching challenge, **puzzle** or problem
- **Explore** a gap in knowledge or practice
- **Join** the **scholarly conversation** about an issue
- **Inspire** your teaching
- **Ground** a curriculum change in the literature





# 12 Flavor Profiles of Literature Reviews





# 12 Flavor Profiles of the Literature Review

## **Debate-Framed**

Organizes the field by highlighting opposing positions or tensions

## **Historical Arc**

Shows how thinking, theory, or practice evolved over time.

## **Typology / Taxonomy Builder**

Groups research into conceptual categories, models, or approaches.

## **Metaphor-Driven**

Frames the field using imagery (ecosystem, mosaic, tapestry, lattice).

## **Paradigm-Challenge**

Critiques prevailing assumptions and argues for alternative lenses.

## **Problem-Setting**

Names a pressing issue or puzzle the field hasn't solved.

## **Gap-Hunting Review**

Spotlights missing contexts, populations, voices, contradictions.

## **Synthesis Builder**

Reconciles disparate or conflicting strands into integrative insight.

## **Methodological Review**

Examines *how* the field studies something — designs, tools, biases.

## **Voice Centered Review**

Analyzes whose perspectives dominate and whose are marginalized.

## **Landscape Review**

Identifies clusters, deserts, subfields, and conceptual geographies.

## **Conceptual Framework Builder**

Examines *how* the field studies something — designs, tools, biases



Which flavor profile fits an idea or a current project that you have?

Where do I start?

# Where to start

- If you don't know anything about the topic
  - Meta analysis/Systematic review
  - Scoping review
- If you know a little bit about the topic
  - Databases
  - Google Scholar
- If you know a lot about the topic
- <https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/resources/research-and-writing-literature-reviews-SoTL>

# Types of Reviews

## Systematic Review/Meta-analysis

- What works?
- Identifies papers that address a question
- Combine the results of the studies to answer a question

## Scoping Review

- What's out there? What have we studied? What do we still need to understand

How can I make time to do a literature review?



# 10-minute Skim

Step 1: Searchable question

Step 2: Title scan

Step 3: Abstract skim

Step 4–6: Theme/tension mapping

Outcome summary

# The 2 Hour Sprint

**“A protected intellectual retreat — not a productivity hack.”**

1. Skim to map the conversation
2. Sort ideas into patterns
3. Draft synthesis not summaries
4. Leave with clarity and momentum

- ✓ You stop after 2 hours
- ✓ You don't finish everything
- ✓ The goal is *energy*, not completeness

# Variations on the 2-hour Sprint

- **Buddy Sprint:** Two faculty sprint simultaneously and then debrief
- **Librarian Assisted Sprint:** consult with a librarian before your sprint
- **AI Assisted Sprint:** Use AI to help you create your synthesis

How can I organize my findings?

# Literature Review Organization Chart

Citation / Author	Key Claim / Finding	Method / Context	Theme / Bucket



How can AI can Help?

# Use AI to Generate Research Topics

- **Help Generate Questions**

- What are the latest areas of research in AI and language instruction?

- **Support Skimming & Sense Making**

- Summarize abstracts or sections of articles
  - Highlight key claims, methods, and findings
  - Compare themes across multiple papers

- **Identify Themes, Patterns, Tensions**

- **Help Draft Synthesis Language**

# AI Tools

- [Connected Papers](#)
- [Consensus](#)
- [Elicit](#)
- [ResearchRabbit](#),

# AI Based Tools for Literature Searching



Research starts here


How does generative AI impact critical thinking in university students?

 All ▾  Pro ▾

 Filter



Try a Deep Search

 Draft an outline

 Create a table



Try the Consensus Meter

# Some Caveats About AI

- AI is still prone to errors and may generate sources that do not exist.
- Always verify AI outputs with original sources to avoid errors.
- High quality literature reviews not only summarize the findings of previous studies but critically appraise the study methods and how they impact the validity of the findings.
- AI can be used as a complement to critical appraisal by a human expert but should not be used in isolation.



# Librarians as Literature Review Partners

Librarians are experts in how knowledge is organized, discovered, and traced across time, disciplines, and platforms.

# Clarify and Refine Questions

## Translate

Translate broad ideas into searchable questions

## Identify

Identify controlled vocabulary and synonyms

## Anticipate

Anticipate where different disciplines “hide” relevant work

# Design Smart, Efficient Search Strategies

Build	Build layered search strings
Recommend	Recommend databases faculty don't know exist
Explain	Explain when Google Scholar is enough — and when it isn't

# Help Map the Scholarly Landscape

## Identifying

Identify seminal works

## Distinguishing

Distinguish foundational vs. peripheral studies

## Tracing

Trace how ideas evolve over time

# Advise About Citation Management & Knowledge Organization

Choose

Choose citation managers strategically

Develop

Develop annotation systems

Create

Create tagging and thematic coding practices



# Northwestern Subject Librarians

- John Dorr FRENCH, ITALIAN, TURKISH
- Michelle Guittar LATAM INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, PORTUGUESE, SPANISH
- Liz Hamilton GERMAN
- Esmeralda Kale MENA, SWAHILI
- Basia Kapolka CLASSICS
- Li (Qunying) Li CHINESE, JAPANESE, KOREAN, SOUTHASIAN LANGUAGES
- Jeannette Moss SLAVIC LANGUAGES
- Jen Young NATIVE AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES
- Jamie Carlstone GENERAL CATALOGUE- ORCID

# Scholarly Research Services

www.library.northwestern.edu/research/scholarly/evidence-synthesis.html

BioCina Joint & Ligam... Rhythm Beads for Hor... The Rich Roll Podcast ... About Me EquiShield SA Powder ... Podcast — Hitendra ...

HOME > RESEARCH > SCHOLARLY RESEARCH SERVICES > EVIDENCE SYNTHESIS

## Evidence Synthesis

Whether you're new to literature searching or an experienced researcher working with a team in a systematic review, we are available to assist with the evidence synthesis process.

### Levels of Support

#### Tier 1: Consultation

During a consultation, you will meet with a librarian to discuss your research question(s), go over keyword and database selection, and get an overview of the review process. Consultations are available for students, faculty, and postdocs. They typically take one hour and can be conducted via Zoom or in person.

#### Tier 2: Collaboration

The second tier of support includes more long term and

#### Evidence Synthesis Research Guide

Visit the [evidence synthesis research guide](#) for step-by-step guidance on conducting a systematized review.

#### Schedule a Consultation

If you'd like to meet with a librarian to discuss your project, complete the [Evidence Synthesis Consultation Request Form](#), and someone will be in touch within 48 hours.

Chat With Us

# Journals You May not Know

- Check out Nicola Simmons' [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Annotated Literature Database](#)
- Browse key journals, such as:
  - [Teaching & Learning Inquiry](#)
  - [The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#)
  - [The International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#)
  - [Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning](#)

# The Searle Center Can Partner with You To



# Our Next Event

February 18<sup>th</sup> 4.00-5.00pm

Zoom

**Institutional Review Board & Data Analysis Support at  
Northwestern**