Literature Reviews
The basics

UCSB McNair Scholars Program – Summer 2011
Definition(s)

- “Re-view” or look again at what’s been written on a particular topic
- Discussion of published scholarly work on a topic/in a research area
- Organized way to summarize, synthesize, make connections between and present literature on a topic
Dr. E’s Definition

- A bibliographic conversation between/among scholarly work on a topic
Some of the questions the review of the literature can answer

Source: The Learning Centre UNSW: http://www.loc.unsw.edu.au
Benefits of a Lit Review

- Provides guide to the literature on a topic
- Offers overview of previous work on a topic
- Enlarges your scope of knowledge about a topic
- Let’s you demonstrate command of the literature in your field
- Offers opportunity to conduct critical appraisal
- Challenges your critical and analytical skills
Some of what it is not

- Final reference list/bibliography for your paper
- A descriptive list of materials on your topic
- A synopsis
- A new contribution to scholarship/research
A successful literature review should:

- Be organized around and directly related to your research question
- Synthesize results into what is/what is not known about the topic
- Identify areas of controversy/disagreement in the literature
- Help you formulate questions that need further investigation
Things to consider as you begin

- Review the actual assignment
- Refine/narrow your topic
- Determine whether you want or need to include historic as well as current research
- Be selective
- Don’t ignore methodology
- Think about organization and how you want to present the sources
Libraries of Adelphi University. Conducting a Literature Review in Education and the Social Sciences

http://libraries.adelphi.edu/research/tutorials/EdLitReview/content/
Where I got my information (truth in advertising)

- The Writing Center. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- University of California, Santa Cruz Library. Write a Literature Review
- The Writing Center. University of Wisconsin, Madison