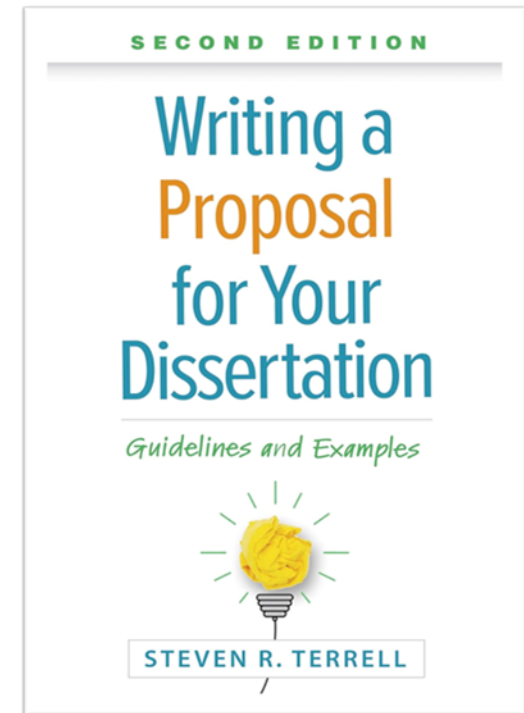


The Review of Literature: An Overview

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What is the Review of Literature?

1. It's not a paper on a topic, it's a paper on the research about a topic – Jim Ollhoff.
2. A link between research that has already been conducted and the research you propose to conduct.
3. The systematic identification, analysis, evaluation, explanation and summary of the complete and current state of the literature in your field.
4. An overview of the current debates, concepts or issues in your field.
5. A preface to and rationale for engaging in new research.
6. A tool that allows you the option of modifying work or altering methods that lead to a new perspective.
7. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/writing_a_literature_review.html

What is the Purpose of the Review of Literature?

1. The ROL provides a link between the current research and what is already known (the background); this allows for substantiation of your research (the significance) of the study.
2. Provides an historical background or theoretical framework of your research in terms of what is already known, prior findings, relevant theories and concepts.
3. It allows you to highlight flaws, gaps or opportunities presented in prior research.
4. In cases where you find your research has already been conducted, it helps you adjust your research to focus on a new perspective by replication, modification or use of different sets of data.
5. Allows for the identification of relevant terminology or definitions pertinent to your study.
6. Allows you to identify other methodologies, tools or measurement instruments that have been used to address your specific problem area.

What the Review of Literature Isn't

1. There isn't a standard formula.
2. A stand-alone document. Much of what needs to be included in the ROL is needed prior to starting a study (e.g., to state a hypothesis or provide background and significance for the problem statement). There is very rarely a case where a proposed study is not related to prior work.
3. The result of one given approach; there is no right or wrong way to conduct an ROL.
4. A unilateral substantiation of your proposed research. You might find that your study has been conducted before; this could lead to replication, modification or the use of new data. I have never seen it lead to completely abandoning a project.

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Step 1: Getting Ready to Write a ROL

Recognize a good review of literature when you see one.

- Was what I read understandable?
- Was there a logical connection between the problem statement, the purpose statement, the research questions, the hypotheses and the ROL?
- Do I feel more like a subject matter expert after reading it?
- Would I feel comfortable developing a research method based on what I read, or is there something I feel is missing?

Terrell, S. (2023). *Writing a proposal for your dissertation: guidelines and examples* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford.

Step 2: Creating an Outline for Your ROL

Introduction: Acquaint the reader with the topic or issue you will be investigating by concisely restating the problem area and research questions. Describe the scope of your literature search and follow this by telling the reader how the review will be organized and presented.

Body of the ROL: Present an in-depth review of the relevant literature in the field Focused by the problem statement, the purpose statement, research questions, and key words. A ROL typically includes journal articles, information from textbooks, conference presentations and, in some instances, material from the popular press such as newspapers, etc. The author groups the literature according to themes (e.g., theoretical articles, prior quantitative or qualitative research). In doing this, ensure that these themes do not emerge from one author, rather they are representative of concepts oftentimes representing the work of several authors. These are then synthesized and written to “tell the story” of the current status of the problem area and support for further research in the field.

Conclusion: This is a summarization and evaluation of what was read focusing on the contributions of studies that add to the body of knowledge related to the problem area and research questions. From that, you should point out calls for future research noted in those studies, gaps in the body of knowledge, papers that may demonstrate a need for new research because of methodological flaws, and conflicting studies in your given research area.

Step 3: Locate the Literature You Need and Start Writing

1. Identify key words.
2. One article can lead to the next.
3. Use technology to aid your search.
4. Identify key authors.
5. Focus on well cited and other research.
6. Know the difference between primary and secondary sources; just because it's published doesn't mean it's valid!
7. Annotate and save what you need,
8. Organize and synthesis what you have read\

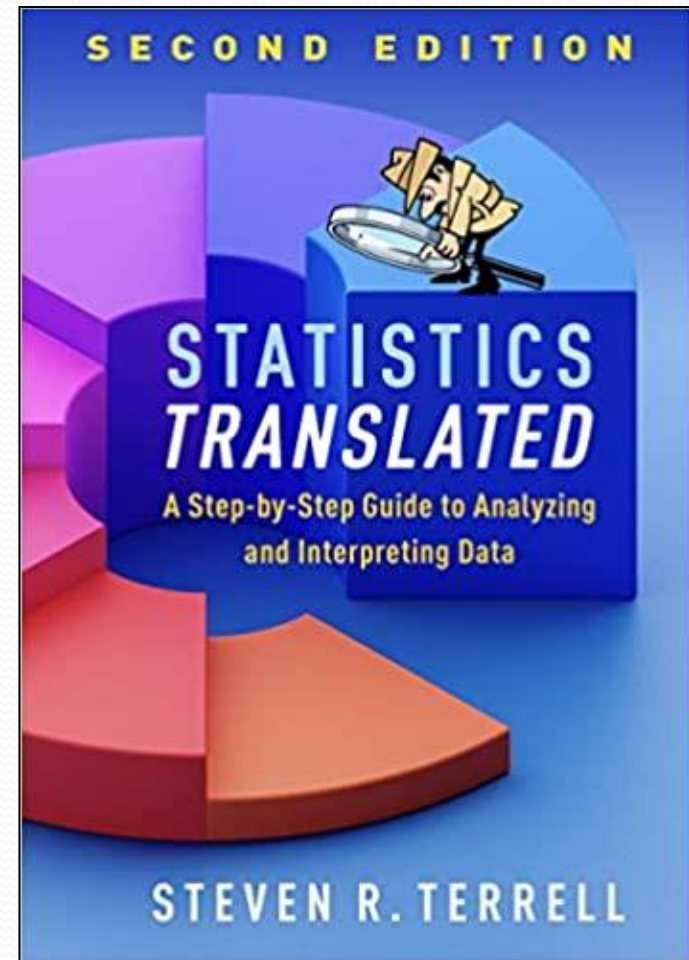
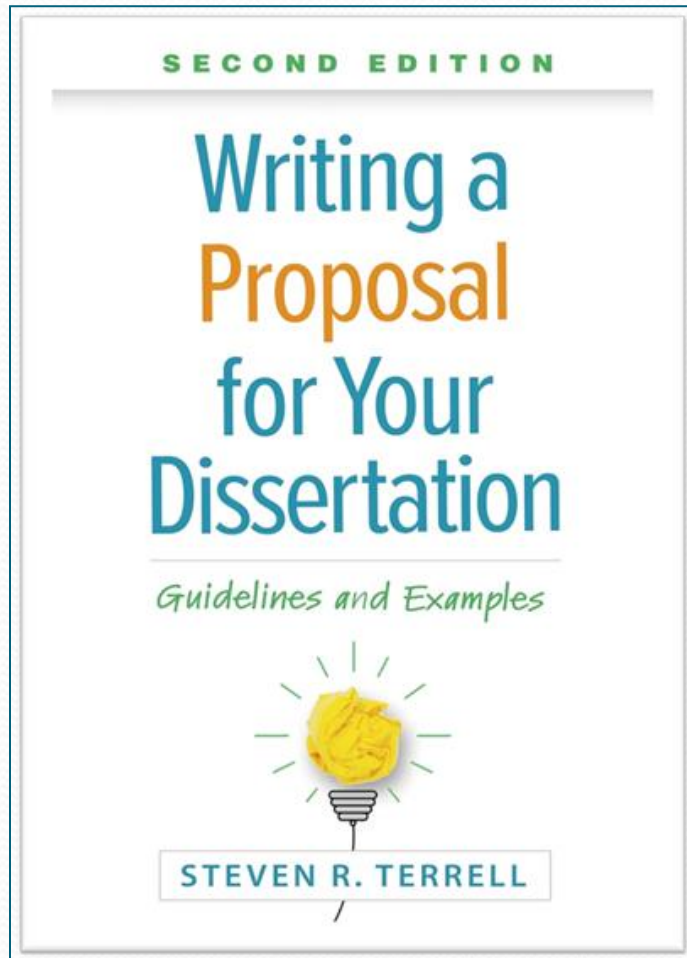
Step 4: Start Writing

1. Organize and synthesize what you have read.
2. Write the Introduction, Content and Conclusion.
3. Synthesize and write the material within the sections.
4. Proof-read carefully. Have someone read your work.
5. A good example: <https://westoahu.hawaii.edu/noeaucenter/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Sample-Literature-Review.pdf>
6. <https://www.slideserve.com/pillan/best-practices-for-teaching-the-literature-review-to-graduate-students>

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You probably won't get it "right" the first time. The key is to continue writing by following guidelines and ensuring it's understood by you and other readers.

References



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