Final Year Papers Preparation

Doing a Literature Search

This brief guide will help you plan and carry out a literature search effectively.

1. Make sure you have a clear idea of your topic
   - Use textbooks for background information on the topic
   - Try browsing recent journal issues for "hot topics"
   - Run a scoping search on the topic to get a feel for what has been published recently.
   - Focus your topic, e.g. you may be interested in communication with patients in health care. Try to narrow it down to an aspect of communication, such as breaking bad news.

2. Define the topic in terms of keywords
   - Consider your topic and identify the terms that you want to search for.
   - Think of alternative terms and synonyms.
   - Think of alternative spellings, particularly American ones, e.g. colour or color, paediatrics or pediatrics and of possible truncations e.g. behavio* will retrieve behavior, behaviour, behavioral and behavioural.
   - Think of possible changes in terminology when looking for older materials, e.g. visually-impaired rather than blind.
   - Think about how you will link your keywords using AND, OR, NOT and brackets. The help section on each database will guide you on the best way to search the resource.

3. Set limits to your search
   - Publication date - how far back do you want to search?
   - Language - is it appropriate to limit your search to languages you can read yourself?
   - Geographical scope - do you want to limit your search to material relating to a particular country or other geographical area?
   - Place of publication - do you want only material published in a particular country or range of countries?
   - Are there any other limitations, for example; age or gender?

4. Searching databases
   - To find what articles have been written on a subject, you must search a citation database (CINAHL, MEDLINE, Cochrane, etc).
   - Once you have your list of articles that you want the full-text of, search iFind to see if we own the journal that the article is in. If we do have the journal title that the article is in, remember to check to see if we hold the appropriate year.
• If the journal is available online, there will be a link in the record which will take you into the e-journal. If the journal is in paper, check the call number of the journal and locate the paper issue in the Library.

Citation Databases to Consider:
CINAHL: clinical, administrative, ethical, social aspects of nursing and allied health
Cochrane Library: systematic reviews, clinical trials
ASSIA: ethical, social, socio-economic aspects of healthcare
HMIC: health care administration and management
MEDLINE: clinical, administrative, ethical, social aspects of healthcare
Web of Science: research based articles on all aspects of healthcare

Along with journal articles consider other forms of evidence such as Guidelines, Government policy documents and reports produced by organisations such as the RCN.

5. Consult websites

• Look at Evidence Search http://www.evidence.nhs.uk/ This is a good source of guidelines & standards from NICE & Royal Colleges.
• Look at the Health in Wales website http://www.wales.nhs.uk/
• Consult websites from the government, NHS, organisations, or academic institutions.

6. Keep a record

• An essential part of literature searching is keeping accurate, consistent and correct records. These should include the years of every database.
• Useful references should be saved and downloaded from databases. Keeping a detailed record of everything useful you find will enable you to provide an accurate reference list and bibliography at the end of your project.

7. Review progress after searching.

• Have you found material which is likely to be relevant to your topic? If there seems to be too much or too little, you may need to redefine your topic and repeat the search process.
• Assess the value of the search in terms of relevance and usefulness; it's quality, not quantity of references that counts.
• If you want to get hold of articles that are not available in the Library they may be obtained via Document Supply.

Contact chhslibrary@swansea.ac.uk with any queries

Book a session with a Librarian using http://bitly.com/CHHSLibrarians