

A stack of six books in various colors (brown, black, tan, blue, red, and dark blue) sits on a polished wooden table. To the right of the books, a laptop is open, displaying a website titled 'Scholmly Insights'. The website has a blue header and contains several articles with text and images. In the background, a large window with a grid pattern allows natural light to enter the room, and a bookshelf filled with books is visible on the left.

Academic Research: Literature Review and Source Evaluation

Welcome to week 3. This presentation guides you through the essential components of conducting an effective literature review, evaluating academic sources, and properly integrating research into your academic writing. We'll explore best practices for finding, organizing, and synthesizing scholarly literature while maintaining academic integrity.

Purpose of a Literature Review

A literature review serves as the foundation of academic research by:

- Establishing what is already known about your topic
- Identifying gaps in existing research
- Providing context and theoretical framework
- Demonstrating your understanding of the field
- Justifying your research questions and methodology

A well-crafted literature review doesn't just summarize sources but creates a dialogue between them, positioning your research within the broader academic conversation.





Sources: Academic vs Industry



Academic Sources

- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Conference proceedings
- Scholarly books and monographs
- Dissertations and theses

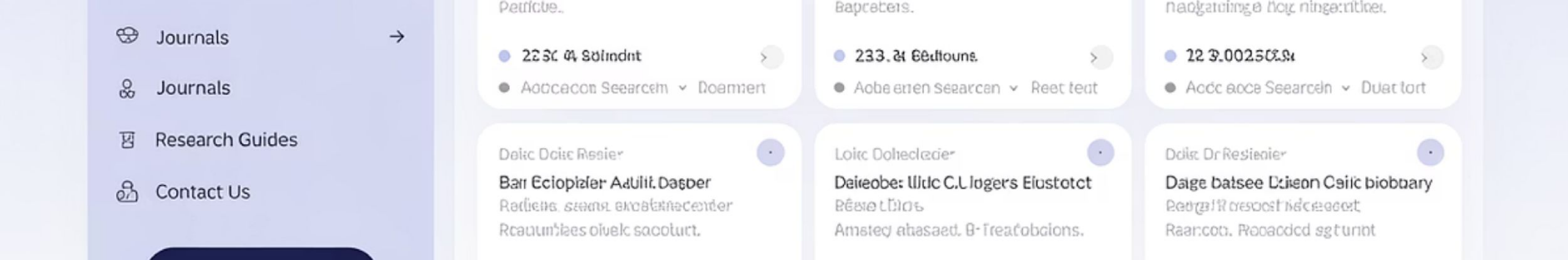
Strengths: Rigorous methodology, theoretical depth, extensive referencing



Industry Sources

- Trade publications
- Market research reports
- White papers
- Professional blogs

Strengths: Current trends, practical applications, real-world context



Searching Databases: Finding Relevant Literature



Google Scholar

Broad coverage across disciplines with citation tracking and related article suggestions. Use advanced search operators to refine results.



EBSCO

Comprehensive database with full-text articles and advanced filtering options. Access through your institution's library portal.



JSTOR

Extensive archive of academic journals, books, and primary sources. Excellent for humanities and social sciences research.

Organising the Review: Themes and Trends

Effective Organization Approaches:

- **Chronological:** Tracing the development of ideas over time
- **Thematic:** Grouping literature by concepts or theories
- **Methodological:** Organizing by research approaches
- **Theoretical:** Arranging by different theoretical frameworks

The organization should highlight patterns, connections, and contradictions in the literature, creating a coherent narrative rather than a disconnected list of summaries.





Synthesising vs Summarising Literature

Summarising

Restating the main points of individual sources separately.

Example: "Smith (2018) found X. Jones (2019) discovered Y. Brown (2020) argued Z."

Problem: Creates a disconnected "list" of findings without integration.

Synthesising

Integrating multiple sources to identify patterns, contradictions, and gaps.

Example: "While Smith (2018) and Jones (2019) found similar results regarding X, Brown's (2020) contradictory findings suggest that context may play a crucial role."

Benefit: Creates new insights through connection and comparison.

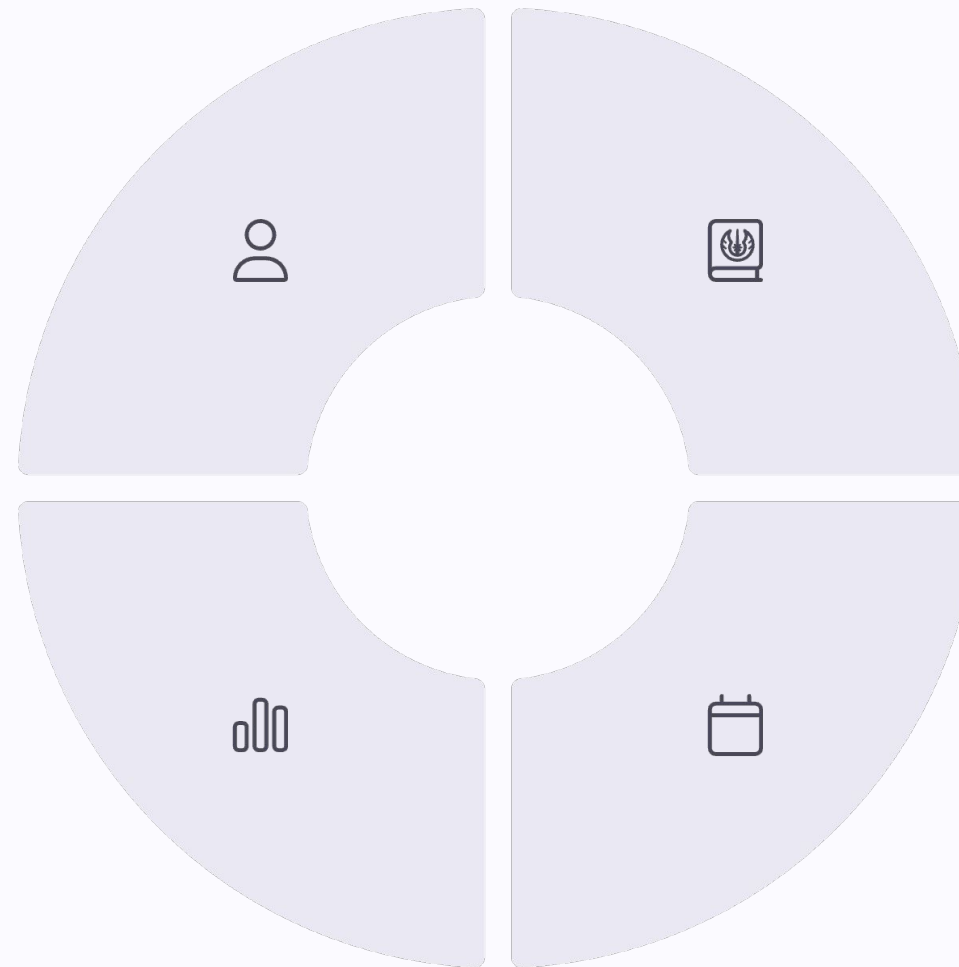
Evaluating Source Credibility

Author Credentials

Academic qualifications, institutional affiliation, publication history, and expertise in the field

Methodology

Research design quality, sample size adequacy, appropriate analysis techniques, and limitations addressed



Publication Quality

Journal impact factor, peer-review process, publisher reputation, and editorial standards

Currency

Publication date relevance to your topic, considering field-specific expectations for recency

Plagiarism, Paraphrasing, and Referencing

Academic Integrity Essentials:

- **Plagiarism:** Using others' ideas or words without proper attribution
- **Paraphrasing:** Restating ideas in your own words while maintaining the original meaning
- **Quoting:** Using exact words with quotation marks and citation
- **Referencing:** Following APA or Harvard style consistently throughout your work

Remember that citation management tools like Zotero, Mendeley, or EndNote can help organize sources and generate properly formatted references.

