



Communications and Media Studies

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DOING A LITERATURE REVIEW/CONTEXT SECTION CMS Senior Project

◆ Literature Review/Context Section

- A Literature Review/Context Section involves reading written works that have addressed in some way the problem or issues you are addressing in your project, and provides background and context for what you are proposing to do.
 - This review first serves to help you clarify your problem, get a better understanding of its significance, and possibly point you in a new or more specific direction of research or creative design.
 - This review also shows in either your large written project or the required written piece of your creative project how others have recognized and grappled with the problem you address in your project. In one way, a literature review itself shows the significance of your project in demonstrating how serious scholarship has recognized the importance of the problem you address. In another way, a literature review demonstrates that you have seriously looked at how others have approached your problem in the past.
 - For those doing creative projects such as films, videos, magazines and others, what you craft in this section really gives context to your project. Your Context Section may include information about the actual topic you address in your project (i.e.,- literature about eating disorders for a magazine about media and body image; literature about the history of anti-war movements for a film about the anti-war movement at Tufts); and/or information about the genre you have selected (i.e. – literature about documentaries, writings about the magazine industry, articles about reality television).

◆ Sources

- There are many types of sources you can use for your Literature Review/Context Section. No matter which sources you end up using, be sure to document them carefully, and include a complete bibliography of all sources cited in the final paper.
 - Types of sources
 - Books
 - Journal articles

- Magazine and newspaper articles
- Internet/online sources
- Pamphlets, brochures
- Compendium volumes, such as communication, sociology, humanities abstracts and yearbooks
- Theses, dissertations and conference papers
- Televisual/video materials
- Interviews, oral histories

◆ Places to Find Literature

- An important source for your literature review is your project director. As your main advisor, your project director will probably be the best informed on the relevant literature for your project. Your other project committee members will be sources as well for relevant literature. Finally, CMS advisors Julie Dobrow and Leslie Goldberg can help you get started.
- Besides the Tisch Library and Internet searches, you can also take advantage of resources in other university libraries and at the Boston Public Library. You can use any of the Boston Consortium Libraries with your Tufts ID. Mugar Library at Boston University is a particularly good complement to the Tisch Library in having material not available at Tisch.
- Harvard's libraries are tough to get into, but they have virtually everything. If you find something held at one of these libraries, but not at any other place, it is possible to make arrangements to get it - see the librarians in Tisch.
- Remember that requesting materials on inter-library loan often takes some time. For example, you can get access to most MA or Ph.D. theses through University Microfilms in Ann Arbor, but it takes a while.
- List of Important Resources
 - *Communication Abstracts* are available at Mugar Library at BU. They summarize all communication articles in academic journals.
 - Academic abstracts for the social sciences, sociology, psychology, and humanities.
 - Thesis and Dissertation Abstracts. These are divided into Humanities, Social and Natural Sciences.
 - Museum of Broadcasting in New York City. This museum has extensive video and audio holdings from American television and radio programs. You need to visit NYC.
 - Vanderbilt University archives. These archives have extensive holdings of newscasts. With a lot of lead-time, you can get this material.
 - The *New York Times Index* and the *Boston Globe Index* are useful for finding newspaper articles. The *Topicator* is a volume that abstracts articles that have appeared in popular periodicals such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. *The Periodical Index* is another importance source for articles in the popular press.