

## **Audio Transcript: Literature Review Assignments in Business: Spying on Conversations 11 May 2020**

### **Scene 1: Title scene**

Hi! My name is Mark Bodnar. I'm a Business & Economics Librarian at SFU.

This video is about conducting literature reviews, a very common assignment in many Business courses.

First, though, let's cover a few housekeeping details:

I'll be simplifying some complex concepts to squeeze them into a short video. I'd be happy to chat with you if your research is taking you into more complicated areas. I can be reached by email at [mbodnar@sfu.ca](mailto:mbodnar@sfu.ca)

Second, even though I just said this video will be short... it will actually be a bit long. Sorry about that. Couldn't be avoided. I'm trying to cover some time-saving tips on how to approach this sort of research and show a few search examples... all in one video.

And third... you can click on the letter "I" in the lower right corner of this video to access an audio transcript as well as links to related resources.

OK, let's get started...

By literature reviews, I mean assignments in which you need to read many scholarly articles on a topic, then summarise the research findings across all of the articles, with the aim of producing a clear and current picture of our most reliable knowledge on the topic.

Such assignments sometimes also require applying that research-based knowledge to an actual issue being dealt with by an organization.

These sorts of assignments can seem straightforward on the surface, but it can be very easy to waste time and get poor results. I'm hoping the approach and tips I provide in this video will help you be more effective and efficient in your research.

### **Scene 2: About the "Only 4 Steps" video**

This video expands and builds on the content of an earlier SFU Library video: "Only 4 Steps: Researching in Academic Business Journals."

The "4 Steps" approach to research is one of those things in life that seem obvious, but only after you know them. When you're in the midst of your very first journal article search, the process can seem far less clear, and it can be easy to get lost.

I'll very briefly review the content of that core "4 Steps" video next, but if you haven't already seen it, I strongly suggest that you pause and go to this YouTube page [<https://bitly.com/Only4Steps>] to watch it before continuing here. An investment of just 6 minutes will get you caught up on the basics

### **Scene 3: Review of "Only 4 Steps"**

Imagine that this big circle contained all the information in the world,

... and this smaller circle contained all the information on your topic. The 4 Steps approach is designed to get you into the smaller circle as quickly as possible, and to help you stay there... right in the sweet spot full of all the information you need.

The first step is to come up with a good list of keywords and phrases for your topic. Then you choose a place to run your search, a database, or, using the 4 Steps term, a tool.

With both keywords and a database ready, you're already at the third of the four steps: keyword searching.

You try a few keyword searches and quickly scan your results looking for anything that's even vaguely related to your topic. It doesn't have to be perfect – you just want to find something in your smaller circle of useful information.

Once you have an article that's at least close to your goals, you need to pause keyword searching and focus instead on the fourth step: cycling your search. That is, you want to make use of the fact that information is interconnected in many ways and follow those connections to other articles in your circle.

I'll return to cycling with some advanced tips later in this video. For now, I'll just say that if you follow this approach, in most cases you'll find many articles on your topic.

But a literature review is a special kind of project: it isn't about finding many or some or even all of the articles on a topic. A literature review is about finding the story hidden in all of that research.

Let me explain...

### **Scene 4: Metaphors — Playing darts while blindfolded**

Some people approach a literature review as if they are playing darts while blindfolded. If you throw enough darts – or do enough keyword searches – you're bound to hit the target occasionally, right? Not only is this approach inefficient – think of all the darts that miss the target! -- the list of results is going to be random, and probably not representative of the research-tested knowledge on the topic.

### **Scene 5: Metaphors — Spying on a conversation**

A better metaphor for your search – one that will almost certainly get you to the best articles quickly – is to instead think of spying on a conversation.

### **Scene 6: Defining “spying on a conversation”**

Imagine you are at a party with many little clusters of people engaged in conversation. Way off in the corner there’s a group that’s talking about your chosen topic.

Your job as a spy is to figure out what they are saying and summarise it for your bosses.

If you just run past them and write down the few words you happen to hear, your results would be pretty random, right? That’s sort of what happens with the blindfolded dart game approach.

Instead, you want to sneak in close to that group and listen carefully to what they are saying. You don’t, however, need to write down every word from every speaker. If you took such an exhaustive document back to your spy bosses, they’d say that you’d given them raw information instead of knowledge that they can act on.

Instead, your bosses would ask you to figure out...

### **Scene 7: Spying... articles cited often by others**

Whose ideas are being **discussed the most?**  
and

Which ideas cause **excitement** and lots of further discussion, and which are largely ignored?

That is, are there some comments made in the little cluster of people that everyone else repeats, talks about, and builds on? And are there other comments that generate very little discussion? Which ones do you think your spy bosses want to hear about?

Jumping out of the metaphor to the actual literature review, this means that you’d be looking for articles that have been cited more often than others, so you’d want to look closely at the references and times cited of the articles you find to get a sense of their impact and importance. I’ll return to this in a few minutes.

### **Scene 8: Spying... Literature review articles**

Back at the party, you’d also be listening for any speakers who summarise all or part of the discussion – that is, people who have done some of your work by highlighting key themes and gaps.

Most research articles have a short literature review section that does exactly that – talks about the major research already done on the topic before explaining how the authors’ research covered in the article will extend, confirm, or counter what’s been done before.

Sometimes, though, you can get lucky and find something even better: an entire article that is only a literature review – one that doesn't offer new ideas, just summarises the key themes, the most deeply researched and understood subtopics, and the gaps. Even if such an article is old, it can provide a foundation for you to build on as you review the rest of the scholarly conversation on the topic.

As with search cycling, I'll show you some tricks for finding literature review articles later in this video. For now, let's keep exploring this metaphor to see what else it might teach us...

### **Scene 9: Spying... expert speakers/authors**

Do some people **speak more** than others?

That is, do some authors show up more often in your search results and in reference lists with multiple articles on the same general topic?

Maybe they are known experts who specialise on your topic?

### **Scene 10: Spying... extending, confirming, countering other research**

Do some people just **confirm** what has been said before without adding any substantial new information?

That's an important task in research as ideas need to be tested and re-tested in many contexts, but such articles won't necessarily form the core of your report.

Do some people take the conversation into **completely new areas**?

Maybe they have extended the research into a new subtopic or a different industry? Would your spy bosses want to know about such extensions?

Do some people provide strong **counter arguments to the prevailing wisdom** and test those arguments with interesting experiments?

I'm sure you get the picture: If you were spying on a conversation, you'd report on the themes, the settled questions, the gaps... whatever would allow your spy bosses to take action on solid evidence... which means that randomly choosing the first articles that show up is very unlikely to produce a useful summary.

Let's change gears for a minute and look at a few search tricks. Note, again, that I'm assuming you already know the "4 Steps" approach.

### **Scene 11: Tools & Tips: introduction to three key databases/tools**

First, a quick introduction to the three databases, or tools, that I'm going to use in this demonstration. I'll be jumping quickly between these databases for the rest of this video. You can find all of them through the SFU Library website.

- a. Business Source Complete is our main database for articles in both business journals and magazines. It also has some features that help when you are trying to cycle your search from one relevant hit to many:

For example, Business Source lists the number of times many articles have been cited by newer articles since they were written. This “Times Cited” feature can be very useful when you’re cycling a search...

- b. PsycINFO is our main Psychology article database, but it can also be useful for many business topics that involve applied psychology. That is, areas such as consumer behaviour, organizational behavior, and human resource management. It also has a “times cited” feature, and it has a useful search feature that allows you to focus on literature reviews.
- c. And I’m sure most of you know about Google Scholar, but you may not know that you can connect to it via the SFU Library site if you are off campus to streamline access to some of any of our many subscribed journals that may show up in your search results. We’ll be exploring its powerful “cited by” feature - similar to the “times cited” feature of the other two databases.

OK... let’s get started with a deeper look at Business Source Complete...

### **Scene 12: Business Source Complete and “times cited”**

Let’s imagine that I was searching for articles on the effect of odours on consumer behaviour, so I ran a keyword search and spotted this article in my results: "[Improving the Store Environment: Do Olfactory Cues Affect Evaluations and Behaviors?](#)". At this point, I’m all the way down at Step 4 in the “4 Steps” approach: cycling my search to stay in the small circle of related information.

I immediately see that my article has been cited by 139 newer articles since it was published in 1996. That is, it’s been cited by 139 newer articles that happen to be in this database.

That last bit is important.

### **Scene 13: Google Scholar and “cited by”**

Let’s jump over to Google Scholar and look up the same article.

Note that Google Scholar lists far more “Cited by” items than Business Source for the same article: over 1200 vs the 139 we got in Business Source. Google Scholar covers many more sources in all subject areas, so it usually has higher “Cited by” numbers.

However, in casting a broader net, Google Scholar may catch some items that don’t fit the requirements of your assignment. Despite the word “Scholar” in its name, it’s not clear

exactly what is being searched by Google, and whether it fits a strict definition of scholarly. You should always evaluate each source carefully, regardless of the database.

#### **Scene 14: Google Scholar and “search within citing articles”**

Since Google Scholar’s lists of citing articles can be quite long, it’s great that it offers a search feature to help you explore those citing articles. If you click on the “Cited by” link, you can then check off the box to “search within citing articles” and enter keywords to focus on different themes in the list.

OK, let’s jump back to our original article in Business Source to explore further.

#### **Scene 15: Business Source Complete and exploring cited references of an article to find heavily cited, older articles**

The database has pulled the 94 references out of the article and given me a direct link to that list. This doesn’t happen for all the academic articles covered by Business Source. When the feature isn’t available, it’s always good to link through to the full article and check out its references for ones that seem particularly relevant, then look them up directly in the database and in other sources like Google Scholar.

#### **Scene 16: Business Source Complete and exploring cited references of an article to find heavily cited, older articles — closer look**

And when I click on that list, I can see immediately which of the articles and chapters cited in my initial hit have also been cited by large numbers of other articles in this database.

This gives me a rough sense of the impact these articles have had on the field since each of them was published.

For instance, I see that one of the references is this 1995 article that has been cited 32 times in Business Source Complete since it was first written: "[Right Under Our Noses: Ambient Scent and Consumer Responses](#)".

#### **Scene 17: PsycINFO: times cited**

OK – Let’s try the last database on my list: PsycINFO. As I mentioned, business subjects that have a strong applied psychology component are often covered quite well in PsycINFO.

We’ll start with our last article: "[Right Under Our Noses: Ambient Scent and Consumer Responses](#)".

Note that PsycINFO also has a “Times cited in this database” feature for at least some of its articles. In this case, it lists 29 citing articles, compared to the 32 number we got in Business Source. Some of those citing articles will be the same, but each database will also have some unique items that could prove to be useful.

For instance, I see that one of the citing articles is from “Journal of Environmental Psychology”— a source that isn’t covered by Business Source Complete.

### **Scene 18: PsycINFO: finding literature reviews**

There’s another feature in PsycINFO that I find very useful: You can limit your search to articles that are literature reviews. As I mentioned earlier, sometimes people write articles that are solely a review of the literature on a topic, rather than a report on a new experiment. These can be amazing sources, even if their topic is a bit broader than your needs or if they are a bit older. Let me demonstrate.

Sticking with the same topic of the effect of smell on consumer behaviour, I enter some keywords. Then I can scroll down to the bottom of the search screen to the Methodology section, and I select the Literature Review option.

This will result in [significantly fewer results](#), but I only need one or two such articles to get a good understanding of what was known on a topic at the point they were written. Then I can explore their references and their “times cited” to connect to related articles, both older and newer.

### **Scene 19: PsycINFO: finding literature reviews — one example article**

For instance, my short result list includes this 2016 literature review article: "[The effects of scent on consumer behaviour](#)".

As you can see from the abstract, the authors have looked at top-ranked journals in marketing and psychology over a 35-year period.

And they’ve identified key themes and gaps in the published research on the topic.

I bet their reference list would be full of relevant articles, each of which could lead us to more articles if we follow the techniques outlined in this video.

### **Scene 20: Business Source Complete: finding literature reviews**

Let’s go back to Business Source one last time. Business Source doesn’t provide an ability to limit your searches to literature review articles, but here’s a simple search tip that can often find at least some lit reviews.

I’ll enter my keyword search as before, but this time I’m going to add a search for the word “review” in the Title field.

The [results](#) aren’t perfect, but on a quick scan I see some lit review articles such as "[The Effects of Ambient Scent on Consumer Behavior](#)"

Or, with a slightly broader focus: "[Exploration of Environmental Dimensions of Servicescapes: A Literature Review](#)"

Sometimes there really are no useful lit reviews published on your topic, but it never hurts to look at their content and their connections to both older and newer articles can be a good way to start understanding the scholarly discussion on a topic.

### **Scene 21: Describing the “conversation” part of “spying on a conversation”**

Which brings me back to the “conversation” in my initial spying example. I know it probably seemed like a stretched and unrealistic metaphor when I first brought it up, but the conversation image is closer to reality than it appears. As academic researchers explore a topic, their main means of official communication is through articles in journals. That’s where they suggest theories and counter-theories, post the results of experiments, critique and build on each other’s work, and generally add to the knowledge on a topic.

### **Scene 22: More on the “conversation” part of “spying on a conversation” + summarising the video content and offering further help**

This academic conversation spans the globe, and it spans decades, so when you look too closely you miss it. The best way to get the big picture of what’s known on a topic is to take a step back and listen to the whole conversation by reading many articles and exploring the interconnections between them... which is exactly what you are doing when you conduct a literature review.

I hope this video is useful for you. I’ve tried to provide a different way to think about this common sort of assignment. I’ve also tried to highlight a few key databases and some useful search techniques.

If you run into problems while conducting a literature review, try contacting AskAway, our online chat research help service.

You’re also welcome to email me directly, but note that it might take me a couple days to reply during busy times. Again, my address is [mbodnar@sfu.ca](mailto:mbodnar@sfu.ca)

Good luck with your research!

**END**