

Methods to Inform IRST Literature Reviews - DRAFT

Literature reviews are used to assess the current state of knowledge on a subject, identify existing research gaps, and/or inform future research directions. The following approaches can be used to inform how the IRST might approach conducting literature reviews. A hybrid approach, which incorporates elements of one or more of the categories below, is also possible.

Narrative Reviews	Descriptive or Mapping Reviews	Scoping Reviews	Aggregative Reviews (Systematic Evidence Reviews)	Realist Reviews	Critical Reviews
<p>Paraphrased: Narrative (“traditional”) reviews summarize or synthesize what has been written on a topic but without an overt systemic or objective methodology. They are primarily descriptive and often focus on a subset of studies in an area chosen based on availability or author selection.</p> <p>https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK481583/</p>	<p>Paraphrased: Descriptive reviews aim to determine the extent to which a body of knowledge in a particular research topic reveals any interpretable pattern or trend with respect to pre-existing findings, methodologies, propositions, and/or theories. Descriptive reviews tend to follow systematic and transparent procedures, including searching, screening and classifying studies. Structured search methods are used to develop a representative sample of a larger group of published works. Characteristics of interest from each study are obtained, such as publication year, research methods, data collection techniques, and direction or strength of research outcomes (e.g., positive, negative, or non-significant) Each study included is treated as the unit of analysis. Authors may claim that the findings from a descriptive review represent the state of the art in a particular area.</p> <p>https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK481583/</p>	<p>Paraphrased: The goal of scoping reviews is to provide an idea about the potential size and nature of the existing literature on an emerging topic. Scoping reviews are also used to identify research gaps in existing literature or determine if a full systematic evidence review is possible or needed. Scoping reviews usually conclude with a detailed research agenda for future work and might include the potential implications for both practice and research. Scoping reviews are intended to be as comprehensive as possible, including grey literature. Inclusion and exclusion criteria help researchers remove studies that are not aligned with the research questions.</p> <p>https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK481583/</p>	<p>Paraphrased: Systematic evidence review is a summary of research results (evidence) from multiple primary studies that uses explicit and reproducible methods to systematically search, critically appraise, and synthesize on a specific issue. These reviews typically involve developing a detailed and comprehensive plan and search strategy prior to starting the review. The goal is to bias by identifying, appraising, and synthesizing all relevant studies on a particular topic. Often, systematic reviews include a meta-analysis component which involves using statistical techniques to synthesize the data from several studies into a single quantitative estimate or summary effect size.</p> <p>https://environmentalevidence.org/information-for-authors/</p> <p>Further information: https://environmentalevidence.org/information-for-authors/5-eligibility-screening/ https://training.cochrane.org/handbook/current/chapter-01</p>	<p>Paraphrased: Realist reviews are theory-driven interpretative reviews that may be more appropriate than systematic reviews for topics where direct causal links are difficult to establish and varying interventions and contexts must be taken into account. Example areas include studies of policy, management, and information systems. Realist reviews often start by identifying likely underlying mechanisms and then analyze available evidence to find out whether and where these mechanisms are supported by the literature.</p> <p>https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK481583/</p>	<p>Somewhat paraphrased: Critical reviews are conducted to reveal strengths, weaknesses, contradictions, controversies, inconsistencies, and/or other important issues with respect to theories, hypotheses, research methods or results from the existing literature on a particular topic of interest. Critical reviews take a reflective look at the research that has been done in a particular area of interest and assess its credibility by using appraisal instruments or critical interpretive methods. Critical reviews attempt to constructively inform other scholars about the weaknesses of prior research and strengthen knowledge development by giving focus and direction to studies for further improvement.</p> <p>https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK481583/</p>