Conducting a Comprehensive Literature Review

NSF CAREERS Workshops
May 29 and 30, 2013
Purpose of literature reviews

• Determine viability of idea
• Define how your study relates to current knowledge in the field
• Identify gaps in the literature
• Demonstrate how your research will add to what is known
• Ultimately, the goal is to craft a compelling argument that your study is needed
What does the NSF say?

• “...significance of the proposed work”
• “...present merits of the proposed project clearly”
• “...sufficient information should be provided to enable reviewers to evaluate the proposal...”
• And, “...should provide a clear statement of the work to be undertaken and must include: ...relation to the present state of knowledge in the field...”

What to include

• The literature that your research will build upon
• All relevant, seminal works
• Current; don’t just recycle the lit review from your dissertation
• Assume that reviewers will know the literature in your field and they will know if you left out a key study or major sources
• The proposal description is limited to 15 pages, length of literature review? Include the major relevant sources in the literature.
UCF Libraries resources

• Connect with your subject librarian
  http://library.ucf.edu/CollectionMgmt/CDlibrarians

• Online subject guides  http://guides.ucf.edu
  expert tip: search “teaching and your research topic” in the Databases

• Set up a consultation with a librarian
  http://library.ucf.edu/Reference/ResearchConsultations

• Desktop delivery  http://library.ucf.edu/ILL/Services

• InfoSource  http://library.ucf.edu/InfoSource
Final thoughts

There is an ethical responsibility for researchers to acknowledge others’ work through proper attribution. No copying or quoting without citing the source. If your name is on it, you’re responsible, even if you didn’t write the literature review or your graduate assistant did it. Remember, grant proposals are submitted through iThenticate (academic version of turnitin), same program used by NSF.
What does the NSF say?

“NSF expects strict adherence to the rules of proper scholarship and attribution. The responsibility for proper scholarship and attribution rests with the authors of a proposal; all parts of the proposal should be prepared with equal care for this concern. Authors other than the PI (or any co-PI) should be named and acknowledged. Serious failure to adhere to such standards can result in findings of research misconduct. NSF policies and rules on research misconduct are discussed in the AAG Chapter VII.C, as well as 45 CFR Part 689.”

Plagiarism in Successful NSF Proposals

- Using plagiarism detection software, the NSF’s internal watchdog has found almost 100 suspicious cases among the 8,000 projects the agency funded in 2011. (Science Insider, 3/8/13 The Scientist, 3/10/13)

- The NSF’s Office of Inspector General (IG), an internal but independent watchdog, used plagiarism detection software to analyze some 8,000 successful funding applications, and flagged 1 to 1.5 percent of cases as suspicious—though it’s not clear what percentage of these are self-plagiarism, in which researchers lift sections from the materials and methods or even introductions of their own previous proposals.
Questions?

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