Literature Review

You will have the opportunity to attend several workshops conducted by library personnel and/or the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. These are designed to provide you with information about different resources available to you for finding literature in your specific area of interest as well as techniques to evaluate the quality of these resources and effective literature search strategies. **Appendix 3** provides a guide with questions to keep in mind while conducting your literature review.

Purpose of Literature Review

The purpose of the literature review is to allow you to describe the scientific knowledge and research recommendations, and to identify the gaps in this knowledge, as communicated through peer-reviewed published manuscripts or textbooks in your area of interest. This forms the foundation of the rationale for your proposed research and summarizes what the expected contribution of your research will be. This becomes an integral part of the Background and Significance Section of your Research Proposal and later on will be used in the application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB, see later sections) as well as in your final Research Report (and possible publications). Through the literature review you will:

- Provide a compelling argument for your project. Why is this topic important? Why are these research questions important?
- Establish that you have knowledge in the topic.
- Avoid outdated research. Avoid duplication.
- Become familiar with all the research in your area of interest and cite not only the references which support your hypothesis but provide an overview of different relevant publications and different points of view.
- Highlight why research findings are important beyond the specific project, i.e. how can the results be applied to other related areas.
- Stress innovations in methods (e.g. new research methods, new interventions, etc).
The following sections provide information as to how to set up your MWU library account, how to start and set up an effective literature search strategy, how to order articles and other library materials through interlibrary loan, and information about EndNoteWeb (a web-based reference/citation management software). These resources will make finding the right articles for your research proposal easier and will help you keep track of your search activities. For any problems or for more information please contact the MWU libraries. Librarians are available to help you with your literature search. The phone number for the library in Downers Grove is (630) 515-6171 and for Glendale is (623) 572-3215. If you have questions about any of these topics, you can also email the MWU Librarians at reference@midwestern.edu.