

## Situating Your Project within Larger Conversations: Doing a Lit Review

Lit reviews involve researching relevant previous work to establish your credibility, build on rather than simply repeat others' work, and demonstrate the need for and significance of your project. Lit reviews are ongoing and iterative. Consider the following questions as you begin:

- If others have asked your same question(s), how have they answered them? In what contexts? What did they find? How might your study complement theirs or fill in some gaps?
- If you're undertaking a "what works?" project, what does the research say about "what is?" What previous work helps you understand and not simply make assumptions about the context for your intervention?
- What theories of learning and findings from the learning sciences are relevant to your project?
- What related SoTL work would inform your project? What about disciplinary research?

The answers to these questions should guide your work.

### Research Guide

Vanderbilt University's the Center for Teaching and the Heard Library have a [research guide for SoTL](#)<sup>1</sup> with resources to facilitate your lit review,<sup>2</sup> particularly the following:



- **Finding Books:** links to Vanderbilt's ACORN catalog and interlibrary loan sites
- **Finding Articles:** links to the major databases that index articles about teaching and learning, as well as surveys, measures, and questionnaires
- **SoTL Journals:** links to the top SoTL journals, as well as lists of SoTL journals by discipline
- **More about SoTL:** links to useful introductory readings about SoTL, as well as links to a few SoTL programs (Vanderbilt and elsewhere) and its relevant professional organizations

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<sup>1</sup> The SoTL Research Guide was created by Vanderbilt University's [Nancy Chick](#) (Center for Teaching), [Melinda Brown](#) (Central Library), and [Lee Ann Lannom](#) (Peabody Library).

<sup>2</sup> Materials indicated by ★ are only available to Vanderbilt students, faculty, and staff.