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Searching the Literature on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL): An Academic Literacies Perspective

Part 1

ABSTRACT

There are few references that critically evaluate the different ways of searching the literature on scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), or how these are related to researchers' goals. We use an academic literacies perspective as a lens with which to explore the different ways that literature searches may be undertaken. While searching the literature is often presented as a scientific objective process, the reality is much messier, nuanced, and iterative. It is a complex, context-dependent process. We provide a practical, critical guide to undertaking SoTL literature searches and argue that these need to be seen as socially constructed processes. There is no one right way of searching the SoTL literature. The academic literacies perspective leads us to emphasise the variety of different purposes for carrying out a literature search. We distinguish between using comprehensive tools and selective sources. We end by arguing that there is a need for SoTL researchers to be less insular and take purposeful steps to search for, cite, and amplify diverse voices. This article complements a separate one where we review and synthesise the SoTL literature.

KEYWORDS

SoTL literature search, academic literacies, searching using comprehensive tools, searching using selective sources, citation practices

INTRODUCTION

A literature search is "a systematic search of the accredited sources and resources" (Hart 2018, 3). As the volume of literature on the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) grows, the need increases for clarity in how to identify "key" references and how to be systematic about undertaking literature searches. Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2014) argue that there is a need "to improve understanding of the literature review process and the role of literature searches within it" (259). As Weller (2011) points out:

> For many lecturers, a model of "scholarly teaching" relies on reading rather than writing practices, given the expectation that lecturers might read and apply research about higher education to enhance their practice but might not necessarily produce comparable written research about their own practices (94).

But how do we identify what to read?

There are many books, chapters, and articles about searching academic literature; some are general, others are specific to particular disciplines or approaches (e.g., Bell and Waters 2018, Ch 6; Hart 2001; Healey, R. L. and Healey, M. 2023). However, few critically evaluate the main search tools and sources for SoTL or how these are related to the researcher's goals (Chick 2016; MacMillan 2018; Minocha 2021). A key feature of SoTL, which can make searching the literature challenging, is the nature of the interdisciplinary "big tent" (Huber and Hutchings 2005), and the diversity of purposes and contexts that characterise the field. Following Booth and Wollacott (2018), we do not attempt to define SoTL, as they argue that: "Attempts to define SoTL flounder when faced with its diversity" (538).

Our review is informed by an academic literacies perspective that views academic reading, writing, and meaning-making as socially constructed processes (Weller 2011). Most work on academic literacies has focussed on supporting student reading and writing (Hilsdon, Malone, and Syska 2019; Lillis and Tuck 2016). We extend this perspective to searching the SoTL literature by academic and professional staff, as well as students. This review should be of interest to both experienced and new SoTL scholars. As MacMillan (2018) notes: "In SoTL work, finding the relevant literature is often the most technically difficult step" (28). We argue that searching the literature is more than a "technical" process. It is affected by values, shaped by conventions, and inspired by citation indexes, journal status, academic esteem, and research genres (Weller, personal communication, 10 March 2022).

 While searching the literature is often presented as a "scientific" process (El-Farargy 2012; Kemtes et al. 2003; Poirier and Behnen 2016), the reality is much messier, nuanced, and iterative. There is no one right way of searching the SoTL literature. Searching the literature cannot be entirely objective and value free. As one anonymous reviewer commented, "I would argue much of scholarship is the delicate craft of knowing how and when to expertly recognise and apply bias." The objective view ignores the biases as to which journals appear in databases and which journals authors choose to cite.

Many who come to SoTL are unfamiliar with the relevant international literature, as well as sometimes grappling with new methods and genres (Chick et al. 2014). Hence, identifying what has been written about SoTL topics that interest them is an important way of developing their identities as SoTL scholars (Healey, Matthews, and Cook-Sather 2019, 2020).

We explore the rationale for undertaking literature searches and argue that the nature of the search varies with the goals and identities of the SoTL researcher and the context and culture in which they are situated. We distinguish between undertaking literature searches using comprehensive tools and selective sources. Both are needed for a full search of the SoTL literature. Whereas the former includes library discovery searches, database searches, and web search engines, the latter focuses on social media, networks, reference lists, bibliographies, author searches, and browsing journals to build on the researcher's prior knowledge of the field (Fister 2015; Fried Foster 2010). We also go beyond peer-reviewed journal articles to include grey literature (i.e., items produced outside traditional academic publishing channels, including guides, reports, conference papers, blogs, and government publications). Depending on the purpose of the search, different combinations of comprehensive tools and selective sources may be appropriate, and scholars may choose to use different tools and sources and to combine them in different ways. We end with a discussion of citation practices in SoTL and argue for the need to take purposeful steps to search for, cite, and amplify diverse voices.

Our aims in writing this paper are to: a) provide a practical, but critical guide that demystifies the process of a SoTL literature search; b) expand what is seen as acceptable and relevant tools and sources in this area of academic practice; and c) extend SoTL citation practices. We analyse how to go about

reviewing the literature in a separate article where we undertake a critical narrative review of what has been written about synthesising the literature on SoTL (Healey, M. and Healey, R. L. 2023). We adopt an academic literacies perspective to frame the discussion in both papers. At the end of the second paper, we illustrate our argument about the importance of adopting an academic literacies framework to both searching and reviewing the literature with an auto-ethnographic account of the often-serendipitous nature of our hunt for sources and the way our thinking and writing evolved during the writing of the two articles.

THE RATIONALE FOR UNDERTAKING A SEARCH OF THE SOTL LITERATURE

Arguably the main rationale for undertaking a search of the SoTL literature is to be able to join in a scholarly conversation about learning and teaching, whether to contribute to an existing conversation or to change it in a different direction (Healey, Matthews, and Cook-Sather 2020). This may be seen as engaging in a "creative inquiry" involving a dialogue with current and past members of a community (Montuori 2005). However, this process can be challenging. Most discipline-based scholars do not receive training in searching educational literature. One participant in a SoTL writing program "described the literature search as 'humongously' different than . . . in her discipline" (Chick et al. 2014, 28). McKinney (2007), quoting a personal communication from Naylor, notes: "Traditional database searching, while useful for locating peer-reviewed journal articles, will probably not prove to be as comprehensive as researchers may have come to expect when conducting research in other disciplines" (37).

Being clear about the purpose of the literature search is critical—Is it to identify what has been written on a topic as a context for a SoTL project? Is it to provide a new perspective on a topic in a freestanding literature review? Is it to keep up to date with the latest literature on a topic with which you are already familiar? Is it finding a few "key" references on a new topic as a scholarly teacher? Or is it striving to highlight experiences and voices that have largely been excluded? These purposes are overlapping, but the focus of the search affects the amount of time you are prepared to commit, its thoroughness, and the number of references that you can cope with (Table 1). In other words, how you go about searching the literature is critically dependent on your purpose. For example, if you are looking for evidence to back-up an argument you make in a paper you are writing, you may search for a couple of references that support the case you are making, though you may need to find several more articles on the topic to identify ones which substantiate your specific argument. On the other hand, if you are preparing the literature review section for a paper, you will need to search much more broadly to contextualise and position your study in the wider literature.

Table 1. The purposes of the literature search

	Time period	Thoroughness	Number of references
Identifying a few "key" references and authors on a topic	One-off	Highly selective examples	A few
Keeping up to date	Continuous	Selective	A few per week / per month
Highlight excluded experiences and voices	Focussed–circular	Covering a range	Sufficient to illustrate excluded experiences and voices

| To inform a SoTL project | Focussed–circular | Covering a range | Sufficient to contextualise and position the study |
| To undertake a freestanding SoTL literature review | Focussed–circular | Full coverage | Identify relevant references from a long, sometimes exhaustive list |

It is important to recognize that the literature search process is not linear, but iterative. You may start with a research topic or question, but then, as you become more familiar with the subject, you may refine the question and the inclusion criteria. It is essentially a circular process that you may go round several times (see also Juntunen and Lehenkari 2021).

AN ACADEMIC LITERACIES PERSPECTIVE ON SEARCHING THE SOTL LITERATURE

In this section we examine how an academic literacies perspective can be a useful lens with which to understand the process of searching the literature. According to Lea (2017), the academic literacies movement takes a social and cultural approach to writing, which contrasts with cognitive perspectives that encourage a deficit view of the literacy capabilities of students (Lillis and Tuck 2016). The literature on academic literacies argues that academic reading and writing are social practices that are related to academic identity, as well as identities privileged in the academy in general and in scholarship more particularly (Lea and Street 1998; Lillis and Scott 2007; Weller 2011). Here we extend that argument to searching the SoTL literature. We need to recognize that SoTL scholars must negotiate the academic hierarchies in which they operate, and the sometimes-conflicting practices in what are seen as acceptable ways of searching the literature and communicating their findings.

Scholarly teaching relates not only to reading and writing about learning and teaching, but also searching and reviewing the relevant literature. Reading and writing practices, and searching and reviewing the literature, are all integrally related to aspects of academic identity and "are not confined to conventional disciplinary articulations" (Lea and Stierer 2011, 607). Gourlay (2009) suggests that academic literacies are "threshold practices" which can lead to a reinforced sense of identity as a student. This idea may also be applied to the transition process that those new to SoTL go through as they develop their SoTL identities through reading, writing, searching, and reviewing SoTL (Coleman and Morris 2021).

The literature on academic literacies emphasises conceptions of identity as context-specific and fluid, and acknowledges that people belong to more than one community at the same time (Lea and Stierer 2009; 2011; Nygaard 2017). For example, Weller (2011) advocates:

> a conception of the dynamics of an academic identity that is not fixed but continuously reconstituted in relation to the social context within which the individual operates and the recognition that discourses are contributory to the forming and reforming of identity (96).

It is often argued that SoTL findings are context-dependent (Blair 2013; Chng, Leibowitz, and Mårtensson 2020; Healey and Healey 2018). Here we suggest that this argument also applies to the process of meaning-making and to the methods of searching the SoTL literature. It is equally true that the identities and perspectives of different people are valued differently (Cook-Sather, personal
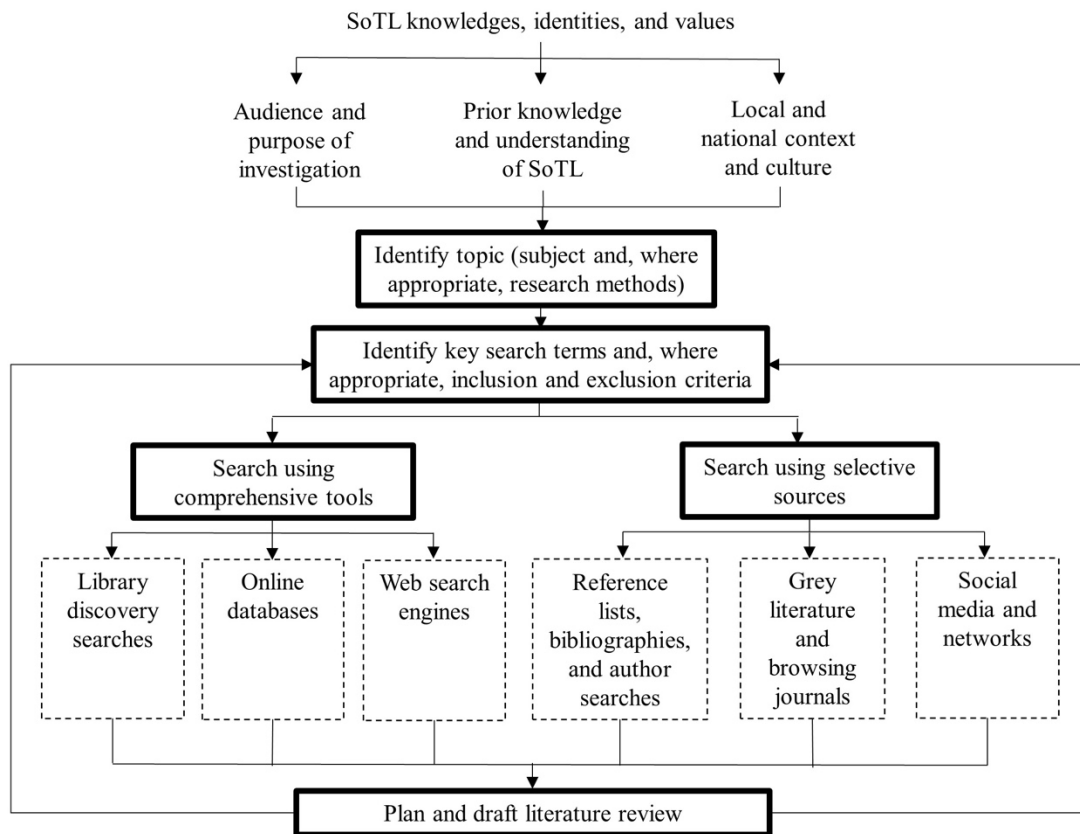
communication, 2 March 2022). Our disciplinary and cultural identities influence what and who we value in the literature, and hence what we search for and emphasise in reviewing it. For example, the "coloniality of knowledge" is the result of Eurocentric/western ways of knowing and understanding the world being privileged over other forms of knowledge (Mignolo 2009). This has silenced or diminished other forms of knowledge, and further subjugated colonised nations and communities. Given the multi-disciplinary nature of SoTL it is important to search literature across contexts, countries, cultures, and genres. In the discussion, we explore the desirability of SoTL going beyond its over-dependence on a limited number of authors and journals.

FRAMING AND MANAGING YOUR SEARCH

The viewpoints discussed in the last section led us to distinguish between undertaking literature searches using comprehensive tools and selective sources. SoTL researchers use both, but different combinations may be appropriate for different purposes, reinforcing the argument that there are multiple ways of undertaking literature searches (Table 1). For example, if undertaking a literature review, using comprehensive tools (such as a library discovery search, an online database search, or a web search engine), are likely to feature strongly. If the objective is to identify a few "key" references you may restrict your search to a textbook or a literature review on the topic, though a quick scan of the first page or two from a library, online, or web search may also prove useful. If your purpose is to keep up to date, you may rely primarily on Google Scholar and journal alerts, though social media and conference attendance may also provide useful sources. Only if you are undertaking a freestanding literature review are you likely to go through a wide-ranging literature search, and even then, you are likely to need to be highly selective about the items you examine in more detail, given the large number of hits that often characterise such searches. Whether you are searching for literature to contextualise a SoTL project or to undertake a full SoTL literature review, we argue that selective sources should be an important part of your toolkit and should be referenced in your writings.

Figure 1 presents a simplified summary framework of the main literature search processes, tools, and sources, and some of the factors influencing the search. It provides a structure for the following sections of this article. The diagram should help you visualise the context and stages of undertaking a literature search, along with some of the choices available. It may give the impression of an ordered linear process, but the reality is much more disordered. Where you start and finish your journey, which stages you go through, and in what order will depend on the purpose of the search (Table 1). Often you will only engage with a small part of the framework. Importantly, we see the processes as circular, and you may return and revisit parts of the framework several times as you learn from your initial findings, possibly revising some of your aims and research questions, and often adding and making changes to your key search terms and the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Figure 1. SoTL literature search framework

SoTL knowledges, identities, and values

Audience and purpose of investigation

Prior knowledge and understanding of SoTL

Local and national context and culture

Identify topic (subject and, where appropriate, research methods)

Identify key search terms and, where appropriate, inclusion and exclusion criteria

Search using comprehensive tools

Search using selective sources

Library discovery searches

Online databases

Web search engines

Reference lists, bibliographies, and author searches

Grey literature and browsing journals

Social media and networks

Plan and draft literature review

Key:
——— Instructions at key stages
------- Descriptions
No line Factors influencing search review process

For details of the literature review process see Healey and Healey (2023) Figure 2.

Given the complexity of the search process, it is sensible to keep a record of your search including the keywords used, the sources searched, and brief notes on the relevant references found. This may be done using a spreadsheet or editable document, or a reference management package, such as EndNote, Mendeley, or Zotero.

Identifying key search terms and selection criteria

The starting point for a literature search involves identifying key search terms and selection criteria. Unfortunately, as MacMillan (2018) points out:

The literature that may inform SoTL work is diverse and dispersed across specialist SoTL publications, journals on teaching and learning, and discipline-focused publications. There is no single database that brings it all together, no established thesaurus of consistent terms (25).

There is no subject classification for SoTL work, such as exists for mathematics (Dewar and Bennett 2015), though the [Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC)](#) database has a tab for its thesaurus, which includes a list of education-related terms that may be used for keywords, though strangely SoTL is not one of them. Looking at textbooks on the subject and the keywords and abstracts of appropriate journal articles can be a useful source of keywords. These can be filtered for different spellings and related terms. It is useful to divide them into key concepts which provide a list of conceptual terms and specific search terms (Table 2) (Healey, R. L. and Healey, M. 2023).

Drawing on the work of Ní Bheoláin, Lowney, and O'Riordan (2020, 9), we identified a set of key terms (Table 2) and inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 3) for undertaking a literature search on searching and reviewing the literature on SoTL.

Table 2. Key concepts and search terms for a literature search on searching and reviewing the literature on SoTL

Key concepts	Search terms
Literature search and review	"literature search" OR "literature review"
Scholarship of teaching and learning	"scholarship of teaching" OR SoTL
Higher education	"higher education" OR university OR college OR postsecondary or "post secondary"

Table 3 gives the criteria that we used in our illustrative search of the literature on searching and reviewing the literature on SoTL. We limited the search of the library, online databases, and web search engines to the last decade to restrict the number of hits obtained. We filtered the references found by limiting it to those for which full access was available, although we recognise that for a full literature review other ways of obtaining references for which a full text is not immediately available should be explored, such as using inter-library loans or requesting a copy from the author. The biggest filter we applied was one of relevance to our focus on the processes of undertaking literature searches and reviews of SoTL. Many references were rejected because they discussed only the outcomes of SoTL literature searches and reviews, or were about non-SoTL subjects. However, we kept some of the references about searching and reviewing literature on subjects other than SoTL when they provided insights that were applicable to SoTL searches and reviews.

Table 3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria for a literature search on searching and reviewing the literature on SoTL

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Timeframe	Jan 2012–Dec 2021	Prior to last 10 years
Language	English	Non-English
Access	Full text available	Only titles or abstracts available
Sample	Referring to higher education	Referring to non-higher education

Type of publication	Academic journal articles, books, chapters, reports, guides, articles in 'serious' newspapers and magazines, and academic blogs	Other non-academic publications
Focus of literature	Discusses processes of undertaking literature searches and reviews of SoTL	Discusses only outcomes of SoTL literature searches and reviews, and non-SoTL subjects

Chick, Nowell, and Lenart (2019) developed a wide-ranging literature search protocol for analysing SoTL practices. They undertook an extensive search of the literature in interdisciplinary databases and multidisciplinary SoTL-focused journals, to which they added a search of grey literature by using many alternative words for SoTL and higher education. They identified an initial list of over 1,600 articles, though no outcomes from using this protocol have yet been published.

LITERATURE SEARCH USING COMPREHENSIVE TOOLS

A literature search might appear to start from a blank slate. Yet when a SoTL practitioner comes to search for literature on a topic, they usually have some previous knowledge that influences what and how they search. So even whilst a literature search using comprehensive tools may appear scientific and objective, it is influenced by the context in which the researcher operates, as emphasised by the academic literacies perspective. In this section we discuss three main search tools—library discovery searches, online databases, and web search engines (Figure 1).

Main search tools

Library discovery searches

For many academics and students, the most common starting place when searching for literature is the university's library discovery search. This tool allows you to search across the library's print and online content that is accessible to your institution. Furthermore, the discovery search facility (run by a variety of services e.g., WorldCat Discovery) includes not only the physical catalogue held by the library, but also usually searches the databases to which the institution subscribes. The library discovery search enables the identification of sources available as print copies or full text downloads, and which ones can be sourced via the inter-library loan service, a national system whereby a user of an academic library can borrow items from another library. Whilst the library discovery search normally includes all the databases to which the library subscribes, some of the search functionality of the individual databases may be lost, and some references may be missed. Therefore, it is also advisable to search relevant online databases (Healey, R. L. and Healey, M. 2023).

Online databases

There are several, both general and subject specific, online databases for searching for literature. One of the most popular general tools is [Web of Science](). This is an interdisciplinary database of journal articles and books. It also searches through some proceedings of international conferences, symposia, seminars, colloquia, workshops, and conventions. Web of Science can be valuable for identifying seminal pieces of work as it provides data on the number of times articles in the journals indexed have been cited by other authors. It contains useful ways of restricting searches by research area, date of publication, and

country. Another useful general online database is Scopus. Whilst both Scopus and Web of Science have some journals that are unique to them, Scopus covers a larger number of journals (Gill 2021).

Unfortunately, few SoTL journals appear in Web of Science or Scopus. This may be because of the relative age of SoTL, as the databases exclude many new journals, particularly open-access journals. They also frequently omit chapters from books. Hence, specific databases can be more useful for SoTL inquiries.

One of the education specific databases is ERIC. It contains a collection of 1.5 million records including journal articles, books, research syntheses, conference papers, technical reports, dissertations, and policy papers, all going back to 1966. Other databases that SoTL researchers use include Education Research Complete, Ebsco Information Services, and Proquest Central, all of which may give access to multiple databases, depending on your library subscription package. SoTL dissertations are growing in importance, so it is worth checking ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global for any dissertations or theses on your SoTL topic; thankfully, the content is also discoverable via Google Scholar. Disciplinary specific databases, such as PsycInfo and PubMed, may also be useful for particular topics.

Web search engines

While classic academic databases like Web of Science and Scopus are locked behind paywalls, Google Scholar and other web search engines can be accessed free of charge. Another difference is that while online databases provide a collection of information that is organised and stored to be accessed for later use, search engines can search unstructured text. General search engines, such as Google, provide lots of useful information on an enormous range of topics. Such tools are indispensable, for example, when searching for definitions of key terms and introductions to topics. However, the huge number of hits can be overwhelming, and presents a significant, time-consuming challenge in terms of filtering out the relevant sources from largely unrelated and low-quality material. Nevertheless, the first couple of pages of a Google search can provide a valuable starting point with which to begin exploring a topic. However, it should be noted that the order in which findings are listed are influenced by many things, including the previous search history of the searcher, their location, and language; the extent to which authors have used search engine optimisation techniques in writing their articles (Sage nd); and Google's desire to maximise advertising revenue. Hence the order of search findings may differ between both searchers and searches. There are also concerns about the biases that may unintentionally be built into the search algorithms that could amplify social inequalities (Hawkins et al. 2021; Noble, 2018; Panch, Mattie, and Atun 2019). Such biases illustrate the importance of drawing on an academic literacies perspective with its emphasis on the social construction of knowledge.

For academic literature, Google Scholar is a more useful tool than a general Google search. As a web search engine focused upon scholarly literature, it provides more detail on academic sources than is obtained through a general Google search. However, caution is still required as "inaccuracies of various kinds are common, as are duplications, omissions and misattributions of publications, with most of these problems caused by the way in which search robots and parser software are used to gather information on scholarly publications" (Tetzner 2021). Nevertheless, Google Scholar is regularly ranked as the most comprehensive academic search engine (e.g., Paperpile 2022). This is confirmed by the finding of an examination of almost 2.5 million citations of over 2,000 highly-cited documents published in 2006. In all subject areas, Google Scholar citation data is essentially "a superset of WoS [Web of Science] and Scopus, with substantial extra coverage" (Martín-Martín et al. 2018, 1160).

Yet, as can be seen in Box 1, a Google Scholar search can produce an overwhelming number of hits. One way to reduce the number of hits, would be to re-run the search by date, and/or other data filters relevant to your search. An alternative way of filtering might be to focus on the first few pages of the search. This may highlight the most "relevant" articles, as the search tool ranks the sources by "weighing the full text of each document, where it was published, who it was written by, as well as how often and how recently it has been cited in other scholarly literature" (Google Scholar 2022). However, focusing on the first few pages based on this ranking algorithm may reduce the likelihood of finding newer articles written by less well-known authors (Matthews 2021). Moreover, it needs to be recognized that Google Scholar "has biases because citation is a social and political process that disadvantages certain groups, including women, younger scholars, scholars in smaller research communities, and scholars opting for risky and innovative work" (Jensenius et al. 2018, 820).

There are also academic search engines that provide a more focussed search than Google Scholar, which does not provide the criteria for what makes its results "scholarly." One that is recommended is [BASE](#) (Bielefeld Academic Search Engine). It is one of the world's most voluminous search engines, especially for academic web resources. Unlike Google Scholar, only document servers and journals that comply with the specific requirements of academic quality and relevance are included.

Obtaining the most out of your search using comprehensive tools

Given the variety of tools that are used to search for literature, it is important to check their "help" facilities. Most allow you to use exact phrases, by placing the phrase in double quotes (" ") (e.g., "literature search"). Most search engines support the use of Boolean operators. The basic ones are represented by the words AND, OR, and NOT (e.g., "literature search" AND SoTL; "higher education" OR university; NOT "United States"). These are particularly useful for increasing or decreasing the number of hits. Using "intitle:" is a way of finding only references that use particular words or phrases in the title, for example, "intitle:SoTL." Different search operators are used by Google, including minus and plus signs instead of NOT and AND (Moz nd). The use of wild cards (* or ?) may be available, though these are not supported by Google Scholar. For example, "decoloni*" will find records containing the words "decolonise," "decolonised," "decolonisation," and "decolonising" (and the American spellings with "z") (Healey R. L. and Healey M. 2023). Many databases will allow you to save searches.

An example of a search using comprehensive tools

When using the search terms in Table 2 in a selection of databases and search engines, Google Scholar was by far the most all-embracing tool; although only the first 1,000 references are listed, and many are not refereed. Both the Library Discovery Search and ERIC also provided many potential references. In contrast, Web of Science identified only a handful of references, suggesting it is unhelpful for SoTL searches. BASE performed slightly better than Web of Science (Box 1).

It is of concern that database searches appear to be very sensitive to what keywords are used and how they are entered in the search function. By excluding "literature review," the number of hits dropped drastically, usually returning 10 percent or fewer hits. This may simply reflect that the literature has much more to say about literature reviews than it does about literature searches, though it is difficult to undertake a review without a search first. We also found that there were many "redundant" references that focused on the "outcomes" of literature reviews and not the "process" of undertaking them. For example, as Google Scholar searches the full text of many documents, such searches may pick up the

term "literature review" from the literature review section of SoTL articles. This raises some questions about the "rigour" and "unbiased" nature of reviews based on literature searches using comprehensive tools, and suggests that how these tools are searched, and relevant references selected, are socially constructed—and that this is not restricted to selective sources.

Box 1. Undertaking a literature search using comprehensive databases and search engines for searching and reviewing the literature on SoTL

Unless specified, a search was undertaken for hits in English, between 2012–21, for ("literature search" OR "literature review") AND ("scholarship of teaching" OR SoTL) AND ("higher education" OR university OR college OR postsecondary OR "post secondary") as in Table 2.

University of Chester Library Discovery Search: 2,069 journal articles, chapters, books, and dissertations
Take out "literature review" and this dropped to 173 hits

Web of Science: 10 articles
Take out "literature review" and 0 hits were obtained.

ERIC: 387 hits using "SoTL literature search review, since 2013, higher education and post-secondary"
Take out "review" and this dropped to 41 hits

Google Scholar: About 16,300 hits using "+" rather than "AND"
Take out "literature review" and this dropped to about 1,500 results
Of these, 222 are listed as "review" articles.

BASE: 37 articles
Take out "literature review" and 2 hits were obtained.

LITERATURE SEARCHES USING SELECTIVE SOURCES

"For a researcher, using a library catalog or database represents a small portion of a large number of tactics that might be employed to get resources for specific projects and generally to keep up in one's fields (Fried Foster 2010, 2). As Fried Foster notes in the above quote, the traditional library discovery searches, online databases, and web search engines discussed in the previous section represent only a small proportion of the search tools used by experienced researchers. Professional networks, citation alerts, announcements of newly published articles in key journals and on social media, grey literature, and reference lists in conference papers and articles, can be just as important (Fister 2015). They are particularly useful sources when the purpose of the search is to identify some "key" references, keep up to date with a topic, or highlight excluded experiences and voices (Table 1). Serendipity can play a key role in such searches.

Fister (2015) goes on to argue that the students that librarians typically advise, "lack the contextual knowledge and the cues that faculty have internalized," and inadvertently the librarians may pay "insufficient attention to the conversational context of research and the network of connections represented through citations" (99). Individuals new to SoTL may also lack this contextual knowledge, leading them to put different emphases on the varied selective sources from experienced scholars (Figure 1).

Identifying recent "literature reviews" on your SoTL topic can be very useful in building a list of relevant references. Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Scopus all allow a specific search for "review" articles.

Once you have identified some "key" works that are contributing to the academic conversation on your topic, one of the quickest ways to build your bibliography is to look at the references they cite, and use Google Scholar to identify other authors that cite these articles, and other papers on the same topic written by these authors. Visual images of the connections between papers as to who cites who are provided by [Connected Papers](). This is "illustrative of the ways in which we do scholarly work. We live and create small worlds, worlds that are textual as well as social, disciplinary, and geographical" (Thomson 2022). Such "snowballing" searches can add significantly to your bibliography. The additional references may reveal new keywords, especially in fields where language is changing. However, snowballing searching has the disadvantage that it tends to reinforce existing biases to citing white, male, senior authors from western countries, and written in English (Chick et al. 2021; Hawkins et al. 2021).

MacMillan (2018) emphasises the importance of networks:

> an often neglected resource in embarking on work in a new field is people. I advise tracking down authors and presenters through publications, conference programs, Twitter, and institutional or personal websites, and asking for introductions to other scholars. Contacting these other researchers may open up reams of research that might otherwise remain hidden (28).

Developing these professional networks is part of building your identity as a learning and teaching scholar (Healey, Matthews, and Cook-Sather 2020). If you have opened free accounts with ResearchGate and/or Google Scholar, you may be able to follow key contributors to the academic conversations in which you are interested, and keep up to date by being notified when they publish new material. It is also heartening to receive alerts when others cite work that you have published.

Grey literature is important in SoTL searches, as many relevant references occur in conference proceedings, on institutional websites, and by sector agencies. These may take the form of working papers, reports, policy documents, blogs, and evaluations that will not necessarily be picked up by Google Scholar, but may be identified through targeted Google searches. MacMillan (cited in Chick 2016) advises that to search academic sites in Australia add: "site:edu.au"; within the UK add: "site:ac.uk"; and in US add "site:edu" to the search box. The same principle applies to other countries that have a specific academic domain, for example within Pakistan add "site:edu.pk" and Malaysia add "site.edu.my." There is no set academic domain for Canada, but MacMillan has helpfully customised a [Google search for Canadian academic searches](). Many useful resources are available from national teaching and learning fora, such as [Advance HE (UK)](); [Ako Aotearoa (New Zealand)](); [Association of American Colleges and Universities (US)](); and [Teaching Forum (Ireland)]().

Where available, bibliographies can be valuable. Some are designed to give new scholars a starting point with which to engage with the literature. For example, the Canadian-based [Teaching and Learning Research Annotated Literature Database](), compiled by Nicola Simmons, contains summaries of three or four research articles on a wide variety of teaching topics in higher education. Others provide more extensive lists of references on specific topics, such as those available from the resources page of [Healey HE Consultants](), which includes bibliographies on engaging students in research and inquiry, students as

partners, SoTL, socially-just pedagogic practices, and writing about learning and teaching in higher education.

Some journals are dedicated to publishing articles about SoTL, such as _Asian Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning_, or aspects of SoTL, for example, _International Journal for Students as Partners_, or discipline-based educational research, such as _Journal of Geography in Higher Education_. If you wish to keep up to date with the conversations in these areas, signing up to the relevant journals ensures that you will be sent an alert when new issues or new articles are published. A valuable Teaching Journals Directory is kept by Kennesaw State University in the United States. They also maintain a list of teaching conferences, though both are biased to North American journals and conferences. Conference proceedings, where published, can be a useful source of new ideas; see, for example, The 2020 SoTL China-International-China Conference Proceedings, though the majority of the articles are in Chinese.

Social media can provide useful sources of information on influential articles, new publications, and conference papers. Requests for advice on teaching and learning resources on the SEDA listserv often stimulate discussion and links to a wide range of literature. In the SoTL field, Peter Felten (@pfeltennc) and Cherie Woolmer (@cheriewoolmer) make frequent informative tweets. You can also search for relevant tweets using #SoTL as a hashtag. Useful references may be mentioned in blogs and are citable. The International Consortium of Educational Developers (ICED) has 27 national members that provide a range of information about teaching and learning in higher education in their countries, including many non-western nations.

Keeping up to date with the broader field of higher education news is helped by the regular reading of magazines and newspapers, such as The Australian, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Times Higher Education, and University World News. The last of these also has Asian and African editions. For example, the latter had a special edition on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference held in South Africa in September 2022. The preview function in Google Books and Amazon is useful in deciding whether a book is worth obtaining to read further and sometimes allows you to read just the section that you are interested in.

SEARCHING THE LITERATURE: AN OVERVIEW

We have explored literature searches using comprehensive tools and selected sources in the last two sections. They complement each other and both are needed, though you may rely more on one than the other at times, depending on the purpose of your search. Unlike the library discovery searches, online databases, and web search engines, the selected sources are much more diffuse, and it is up to your judgement as a SoTL scholar as to which journals, conference proceedings, and blog sites to browse. Often references that turn out to be "just what you were looking for" are found by chance when you scan a citation list, browse an institutional or sector agency website, see a tweet, or read a higher education magazine. Such serendipitous finds, and your choices as to which selective literature search sources to explore, emphasise again how knowledge is socially constructed.

There is no right place to begin your literature search in preparing a critical review of a SoTL topic. Sometimes you may start with a list of key references identified by a knowledgeable colleague; in other cases you may begin with a literature review or a textbook. Once you have a grasp of the field you may want to explore some of the comprehensive databases and search engines (Thompson 2020).

Moreover, searching the literature can be a messy business to which you keep returning as your understanding of the topic develops, as you explore the references you have found, follow-up on

arguments and references that their authors cite, respond to comments from critical friends, and come across additional sources serendipitously. For example, we carried out several additional searches on specific topics during the preparation of this and the accompanying article on reviewing the literature on SoTL (Healey, M., and Healey, R. L. 2023), including the literature on academic literacies; reviews of the nature, strengths and limitations of different search sources, such as Google and Google Scholar, and grey literature; the debate about systematic versus narrative reviews; and citation practices. As a result, in undertaking the literature search about searching and reviewing the literature on SoTL, we found that we relaxed some of the inclusion and exclusion criteria we began with in Table 2. You will see in the reference list for this article and the accompanying one that we have included several key references we found that were published before the last decade. We have also drawn on many articles that are concerned with searching and reviewing literature in general, and not just about SoTL, as they provided important insights.

IMPLICATIONS FOR BROADENING CITATION PRACTICES IN SOTL

According to Becher and Trowler (2001), disciplines act like academic tribes, and many are in part defined by their citation practices. Tight (2008) has used citation practices within the field of higher education to identify "a series of, somewhat overlapping, communities of practice" (604). Similar arguments could be applied to SoTL, though given its origins in the United States, and its recency of development (usually dated from the publication of Boyer's (1990) seminal work), the issue of insularity in SoTL citation practices may be greater than in other disciplines and inter-disciplines. Citing can "give voice, and it can silence. . . . Intentionally or not, citing a source imbues it and its author or authors with power" (Chick et al. 2021, 1 and 3). We need to recognize "how citational practices can be a tool for either the reification of, or resistance to, unethical hierarchies of knowledge production" (Mott and Cockayne 2017, 954).

A cursory examination of the reference lists of articles published on similar topics in discipline-based educational research journals and general SoTL journals indicates that in many cases the overlap is limited. This suggests that there may be a lack of awareness of each other's literature and a danger of reinventing wheels. This observation is of concern because it has been argued that "for most academics, developing the scholarship of teaching will only bring about change in their priorities if it is embedded in disciplines and departments" (Healey 2000, 172–3). Parker (2011) also calls for expanding disciplines through including SoTL in what counts in academia. It is, however, unusual to bring generic and discipline-based SoTL literatures together (e.g., Cleaver, Lintern, and McLinden 2018). Roux et al. (2021), moreover, conclude, from examining the relationship between communities that conduct research on teaching and learning in higher education, that higher education studies, discipline-based educational research, and other higher education research communities "stand to benefit from multidisciplinary engagement with each other, because of their different perspectives on the problems of higher education" (50).

Another form of insularity is only, or primarily, citing references written by authors in the same country as the writer(s). This may be understandable in institutional and national journals, but it is inappropriate in SoTL journals that claim to be international. Yet there are many examples of this practice, as Chick et al. (2021) have noted, particularly, though not exclusively, from authors based in the United States. There may be a justification for comparing findings with studies that share the same curriculum or social norms, but there is little excuse to omit all reference to studies on the same topic

simply because they have been carried out in other countries. It is particularly common in the SoTL literature to focus only on literature from western countries or cultures, which is where journals published in non-western countries, such as Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in the South, play such a significant role. As Chng and Looker (2013) explain: "Location, even if unintentionally, seems to have been theorized into the dominant discourse where the Western location is unconsciously amalgamated with the universal and treated as default "common sense" and other locations are theorized out of the picture totally" (139). Looker (2020) later observed, for example, that: "The conversations in South Africa about decolonialisation of teaching, learning, and curriculum are a very different conversation than the ones I am aware of in the North American SoTL communities" (30) (see also Behari-Leak 2020). An analysis of the New Zealand university application of traditional marae-based teaching approaches and the transformative learning such cultural spaces can encourage is provided by Adds et al. (2011). Specific Indigenous research methods have also been identified (Drawson, Toombs, and Mushquash 2017). However, research methods, approaches, and ideas from the "North" continue to dominate. For example, Guzmán-Valenzuela (2017) documented evidence that "research on teaching and learning in Latin America relies heavily on the work of scholars and the knowledge produced in the North" (13). Chick et al. (2021), drawing on the work of Mott and Cockayne (2017), also discuss calls to encourage demographic diversity in citation practices, including identity categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and socio-economic status. An analysis of the country of origin of the authors of papers cited in this paper and the accompanying one is presented in Healey, M. and Healey, R. L. (2023) to make the issue of geographic diversification explicit.

Such calls to broaden citation practices raise issues of changing the values of SoTL researchers to realise the relevance and importance of reading and citing the literature from other disciplines, institutions, countries, and cultures, and from authors of underrepresented demographic groups. This aligns with the recent growth of interest in embedding equity, diversity, and inclusion in teaching practices and decolonizing the curriculum (Healey and Healey 2022). Chick et al. (2021) offer 10 principles for guiding a more intentional, values-driven approach to citation practices in SoTL (Table 4). A practical step forward is the crowd sourced bibliography that identifies SoTL articles by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPoC). "Careful and conscientious citation is important because the choices we make about whom to cite—and who is then left out of the conversation—directly impact the cultivation of a rich and diverse discipline" (Mott and Cockayne 2017, 955).

Table 4. Principles for guiding SoTL citation practices
1. Be wakeful
2. Self-assess
3. Read widely and curiously
4. Now, cite with intention
5. Name them
6. Identify with care
7. Include their voices
8. Cite beyond publication
9. Collaborate and co-author
10. Encourage peers

Source: Chick et al. (2021, 16–20)

CONCLUSION

Our intention in writing this article was to apply an academic literacies framework to the process of searching the SoTL literature and to provide new and experienced SoTL practitioners with advice on how to undertake a search of the SoTL literature, not only effectively and efficiently, but also with creativity and imagination. We wanted to challenge the view that the literature search process can be objective and scientific, and emphasise the need to recognise the biases around which journals appear in databases and which journals authors include and exclude from scholarly conversations. We emphasise that searching the literature can be a messy business that you will keep returning to throughout your SoTL project. We need to change the objective mindset we too commonly bring to the search process.

We have argued that an ability to search the literature on SoTL is an important skill that academics, professionals, and students interested in investigating learning and teaching in higher education need to develop, and one that will enhance their identities as SoTL scholars. However, it is also a skill that is nuanced by the local and national context in which the study is located, the purposes of the inquiry, the audiences it addresses, and the underlying values and identities of the investigators. Using an academic literacies perspective as a lens through which to view the nature of searching the literature has helped us to understand that these are social processes that are context dependent, and are constrained by the hierarchies in the academy. We extend many of these arguments to the practice of reviewing the SoTL literature in the separate accompanying article (Healey, M. and Healey, R. L. 2023).

For the future, we call for SoTL authors to widen their citation practices and to engage in scholarly conversations with colleagues in a wider range of genres, disciplines, institutions, countries, and cultures, as well as authors from underrepresented demographic groups. In these ways we can demonstrate the values that should underlie SoTL practices.

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