Reflective Essay

Anay Ochoa

In this study, we examined the effects of egg mass, hatchling size, and clutch on the size of young female American alligators (hatching to 6 months old) in each of three distinct years. Before initiating the writing process, a literature review on the topic was gather. Literature reviews are important because they allow an identification of what is already known in the scientific literature and any gaps in the knowledge. I began my research collection process by first identifying what type of background data I needed for my paper. Background information for my topic of interest would include an overview of the American alligator (Alligator mississippiensis) such as its breeding period, determinants of growth, and clutch effects on the growth of American alligators. Since this study can be used for comparative analysis, I found similar studies performed with other animals closely related to alligators. With the initiation of these areas, a gap in the literature was identified.

In this literature review, Google Scholar and PubMed were used to find original research papers and background literature on the topic of interest. The CSUSM library contains links to the Google Scholar and PubMed databases that allow you to obtain the full pdf of the study you are interested in. Key terms such as alligator determinants of growth, alligator clutch effects on growth, and alligator reproduction period were searched when gathering information. Often time searches containing very specific terms resulted in limited results or they did not generate many helpful results. I would then modify the specific term searched to a broader term. This resulted in more articles that could potentially be used within the literature review. As successful papers relevant to the study were located, the citation manager, Zotero, was used to create a collection of the papers. Google scholar is a helpful database to find background literature studies as there is a

function within the database that allows you to view the papers that have cited the study of interest. This function allowed me to find papers that were of similar content to the papers I had collected for my study. PubMed has a different feature that suggests similar articles to the one you have selected. This is a helpful feature that allows you to continue your search. After identifying multiple papers of interest, I used the reference page to identify additional original research papers. The reference page was very useful in my collection of scientific papers as it provided me other papers with similar topics. The discussion section of the papers that were relevant to my study contained citations that supported or contradicted the results obtained in the study. This allowed me to compile a wide range of papers that covered the different aspects of my study.

After the data analyses of my study, I was able to begin the writing process. I used the background information I mention previously to write the introduction of my paper. Once the method and results section was completed, I began to write a discussion. Within the discussion, I was able to compare my results to what others had found in the field.