

# Identifying the potential for a comprehensive literature review service at the Institute of Oncology Ljubljana

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## Abstract

*The number of systematic reviews and other types of reviews published worldwide to assist in clinical decision making is increasing rapidly. A large number of these studies point to the need for expert searching as an opportunity for librarians to develop a literature review search service as a key medical library service. The aims of the study are to analyse the review practices at the Institute of Oncology Ljubljana (systematic) and to identify the potential for establishing a comprehensive literature review support service. A quantitative analysis of the Institute's 101 systematic reviews and 534 other review articles from 4 databases shows an increasing number of published articles from 2000 onwards. An analysis of 45 surveys identifies a high need for and expectation from librarians' participation in the review process and in the research/clinical team.*

**Key words:** evidence-based medicine/methods; review literature as topic; library services; professional role; authorship/standards.

## Introduction

This paper is based on an award-winning poster presented at the EAHIL Conference in Cardiff, UK, 9-13 July 2018.

The research is a further development and practical implementation of previous study findings on the current level of library services' embeddedness in biomedical libraries in Slovenia (also presented as the poster *Embedded health librarianship in Slovenia: current practice and challenges* at the ICM + EAHIL Workshop in Dublin, Ireland, 12-16 June 2017). Previous study among Slovene biomedical libraries has brought a clearer view on the advantages, barriers, and unutilized potentials in developing embedded library services. It identified the participation of a librarian in literature searching and their presence as a co-author or team member in conducting and publishing systematic reviews (SR) as highly needed among Slovenian researchers and healthcare professionals. However, in most libraries, the literature search service is offered upon user's request only. The actual level of librarians'

participation in conducting and publishing reviews is low (1).

Recently published papers show that the participation of a librarian in a review process is a step to ensure that search strategies are comprehensive, sensitive, and reproducible. Librarian-mediated searches are better than medical staff searches in the range of databases and other sources of information searched, in the methodical approach, in the reliability of results, and in cost-effectiveness (2-5).

## Aims

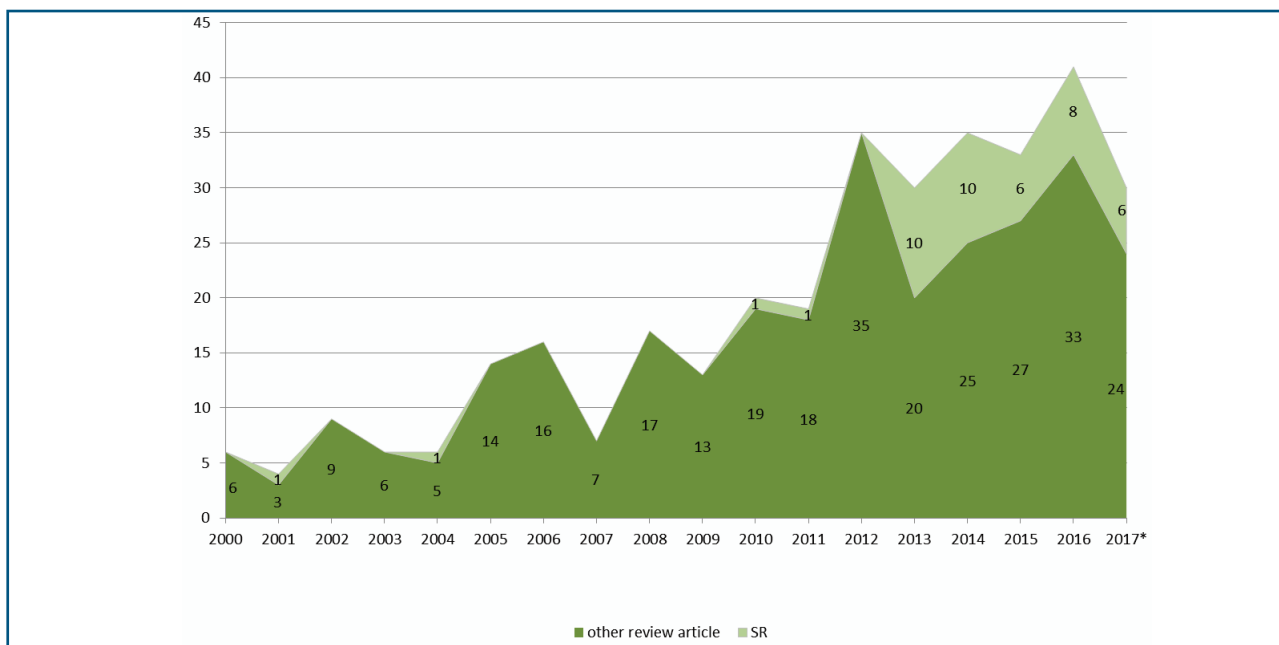
The aims of the study are to analyse the (systematic) review practices at the Institute of Oncology Ljubljana, and to identify the potential for establishing a comprehensive literature review support service.

## Methods

In October 2017, a literature search was carried out for the Institute's published SRs and other review articles across 4 bibliographic databases (Web of

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**Fig. 1.** Number of SRs and other review articles published between 2000 and 2017.

\*A literature search was carried out in October 2017.

Science, Scopus, Medline, and the Slovenian COBISS.si) from 2000 onwards (Fig. 1). 101 SRs and 534 other review articles were identified. After de-duplication and screening, 46 SRs and 304 other reviews were selected. We conducted a quantitative analysis of the Institute's publishing practices and trends as related to the reviews (6).

An online survey was sent to researchers and other healthcare professionals of the Institute. Of the 75 responses received, 45 were fully completed and analysed. The survey included questions about information-seeking and review publishing behaviour and about the needs for a librarian's involvement in the review process (consultation on formulating review questions, identifying relevant databases and other sources of information, developing search strategies, use of reference management tools, developing methodology protocol, co-authorship, etc.).

## Results

The results of the quantitative analysis of the review publishing practices were:

- all 46 SRs published in English, of which 15% published in one Slovenian journal;
- majority of SRs are published in co-authorship

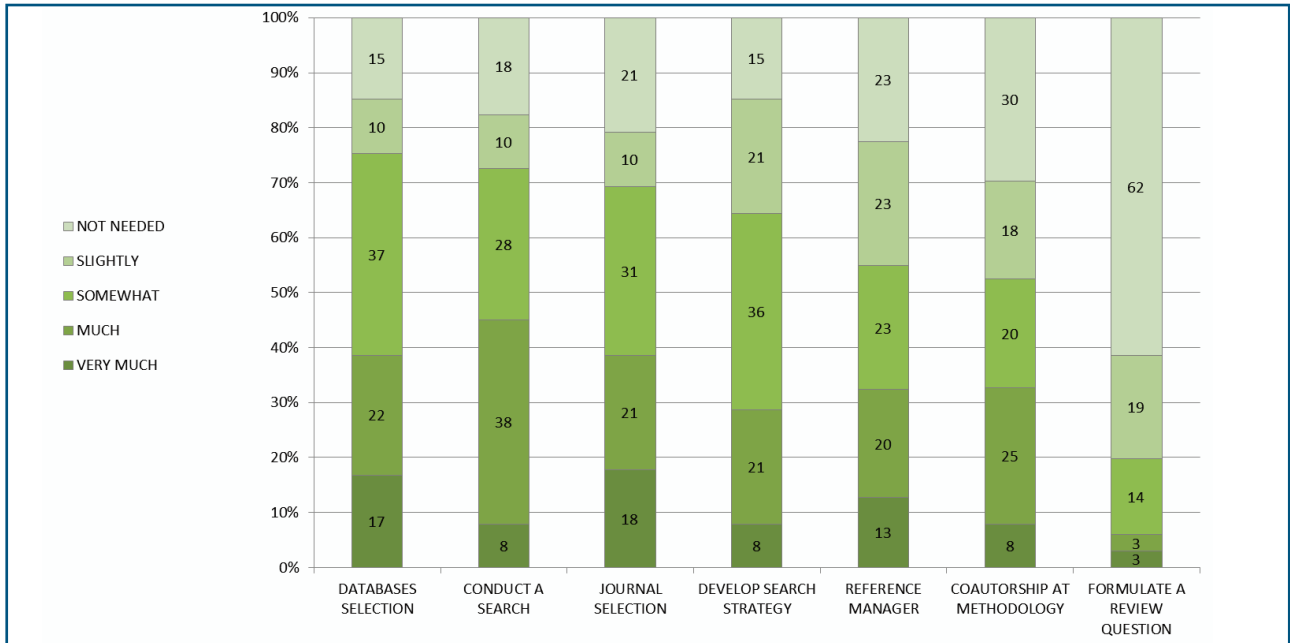
with non-Slovenian authors;

- 17% of SRs were written exclusively by Slovenian authors;
- from 2013 onwards, an average of 8 SRs have been published per year;
- 23% of other review articles are published in the Slovenian language or in the Slovenian language with an English translation;
- from 2013 onwards, more than 20 other review articles were published per year; from 2015, that number has increased to more than 25 articles per year;
- on average, between 2012 and 2016, 35 SRs and other review articles were published per year.

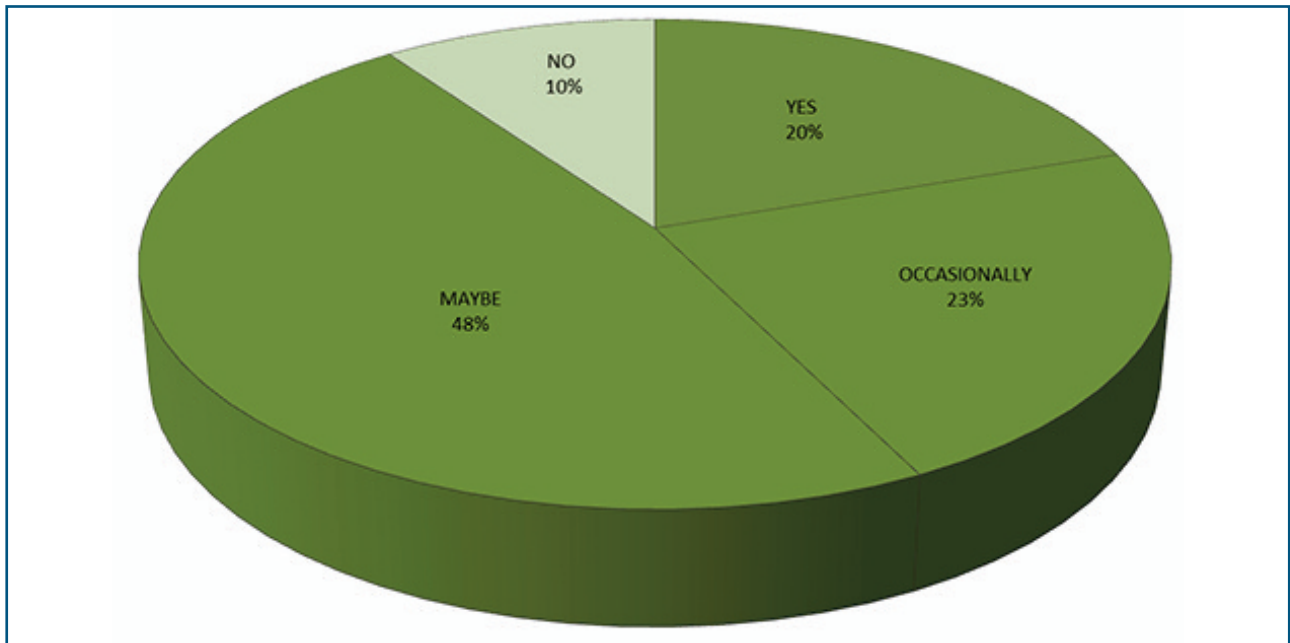
The results of the online survey (Fig. 2 and 3) were:

- frequency of searches: 40% of respondents search more than once per week, 28% more than once per month, 13% once per month, and 11% once per week;
- average time spent per search: 49% of respondents search from one to three hours, 20% occasionally, in small parts over a longer period, 18% less than one hour;
- 60% of respondents asked the Institute's librarian for assistance with systematic searching;

## Award for the best poster presentation



**Fig. 2.** At which phases of literature review would you need a librarian's help?



**Fig. 3.** Would you like to include a librarian in your research (team)?

- 73% have already published one or more (systematic) review articles, 84% of them asked for assistance with searching;
- just 10% of respondents would not want to include a librarian in their teams, the main reason being the specific nature of their professional work;
- the librarian was never acknowledged as a co-author of an article methodology section (7);

- those who have already published one or more review articles, or those who search the literature on a weekly to daily basis, have similar habits and needs as the average respondent;
- active researchers want to include a librarian in their group, would like to undertake a course on how to write and publish a review article, and would welcome support when writing methodology.

### Discussion and conclusions

The results of the survey and the quantitative analysis of the review publishing practices identified the need and the potential for establishing a new comprehensive literature review support service.

The results of the quantitative analysis show that the number of the Institute's published (systematic) review articles is increasing.

Based on the survey responses, we were able to identify the average library end-user profile (that does not differ from the profile of the active researcher) with their high needs for, and expectations from, the librarian's participation in the review process and in their research/clinical team.

The results will help the Institute's library management in planning to establish, develop, implement, and promote the library service in next two years.

We hope that this paper could be useful to other (medical) libraries (in Slovenia) working in similar environments.

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