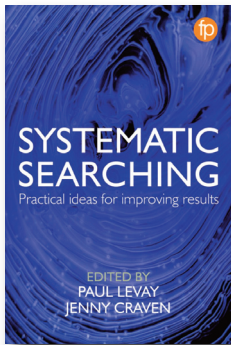


SYSTEMATIC SEARCHING: PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR IMPROVING RESULTS



Systematic Searching: Practical ideas for improving results

Levay P and Craven J
(eds).
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Approaches to systematic searching are changing in response to a number of challenges: the quantity of published and semi-published information continues to grow, systematic reviews are now undertaken on a far wider range of topics than the effectiveness of a particular therapeutic intervention, important as such reviews continue to be, and systematic review methods have been taken up, and developed outside health, in areas such as social policy and the social sciences, and beyond.

The literature on systematic searching is concentrated in a number of journals, chiefly in *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, *Research Synthesis Methods*, *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, *the Journal of the Canadian Health Libraries Association / Journal de l'Association des bibliothèques de la santé du Canada* and, of course, this journal. While it is ambitious to tackle this subject in book form, the editors of *Systematic Searching: Practical ideas for improving results* have proved equal to the task, and have done the profession a great favour by bringing together

chapters discussing every aspect of systematic searching both as it stands in 2019, and looking forwards .

These fourteen chapters are written by twenty-three contributors from Britain, Germany, Australia, Canada and the USA, many of them well-known names in the systematic searching world. Emphasising the practical element, each chapter contains case studies, to make the relevance and applicability of the tools discussed clearer, and, as well as a full bibliography, highlighted suggestions for further reading. A glossary gives definitions of useful terms, including some of the witty acronyms some searchers have coined, and there is a well-constructed index.

The chapters are arranged in three sections, discussing firstly new developments in systematic reviews themselves, and in search methodology, and secondly, new technologies and new directions in evidence gathering and analysis, such as the use of social media, linked data, text mining and evidence surveillance. Finally, for as the editors say, “there would be little value in developing methods and technologies without the right people to implement them”, four chapters consider training new expert searchers, collaborative working, both with review teams and with other searchers, communication for information specialists and the role of the information specialist as expert searcher.

In such a rich text, I hesitate to single out particular chapters, but Su Golder’s on social media and Julie Glanville’s on text mining particularly caught my imagination, while Andrew Booth’s on Innovative Approaches to Systematic Reviews is as wise and

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authoritative as we would expect. Thomas, Noel-Storr and McDonald guide the reader through the emerging techniques of evidence surveillance, as applied in Cochrane Crowd.

In their conclusion, in a no doubt conscious reference to McGowan and Sampson's seminal article (1) from 2005, Levay and Craven challenge us: "Systematic reviews need systematic searches. Systematic searchers need to be flexible, creative and at the forefront of innovation".

Searchers who spend most or all of their time on systematic review searches will find much of value in this book; but the approaches and developments

described here have relevance for those of us whose search workload is less exalted. Every health library should have a copy; and every health librarian should read it.

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¹ McGowan J, Sampson M. Systematic reviews need systematic searchers. *J Med Libr Assoc.* 2005;93(1):74-80.