Are We Making a Difference?  
An Exploration of Outcomes for a Systematic Review Service

Jennifer Deberg MLS, Matt Regan MLIS, Heather S. Healy MLS, Chris Childs MLS  
Hardin Library for the Health Sciences, University of Iowa Libraries

**Objectives**

The purpose of this project was to explore outcomes of our formal systematic review searching service. One question of interest was whether the establishment of this program in 2013 had an impact on librarian authorship or acknowledgement in papers published by an author affiliated with the University of Iowa. A secondary aim was to evaluate whether the program has had an impact on the quality of reporting.

**Methods and Process**

PubMed, Scopus, and CINAHL were searched for the past 10 years for systematic reviews authored by University of Iowa health sciences faculty. Publications were evaluated for librarian authorship or acknowledgement as well as the inclusion of the PRISMA flow diagram and a replicable search strategy.

Total yield from PubMed, Scopus, and CINAHL = 953  
Duplicates removed = 635  
Excluded in screening = 359  
Full text review = 276

- Included  
  Systematic reviews or meta-analyses with any University of Iowa author listed

- Excluded  
  - Topics outside of the health sciences  
  - Consensus statements  
  - Other types of reviews (integrative, scoping, umbrella)  
  - Guidelines including systematic searches but where SR was not the primary purpose  
  - Meta-analyses that did not use a literature search for the data source

**Education Opportunities**

- Papers note using PRISMA but all elements not reported  
- Papers with a single author  
- Papers with only one database searched  
- PubMed searched via the Endnote interface  
- Reference to flow diagram as “search strategy”  
- Reference to list of search terms as “search strategy”  
- Search reporting included search terms but no Booleans  
- Search used only MeSH terms  
- Search used only keywords  
- Search included Boolean and other syntax errors  
- Search used database filters for age or humans

**Conclusions**

The establishment and ongoing development of our systematic review program has had a modest impact on the reporting quality of systematic reviews and meta-analyses authored at our institution. However, there is much room for improvement. A few ideas are as follows: promoting the program to different groups, experimenting with different approaches for marketing, training additional librarians to contribute to the service, requiring the completion of a protocol prior to providing search services, and discussing our concerns with influential faculty authors who are not consistently adhering to quality standards.

A future project for our team to consider may be to evaluate the quality by subject area to determine priorities for education. Another possibility would be to further investigate the barriers to strong methodology at our institution. Doing so may help us determine a strategy to maximize the impact of this service.