

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Foster, MJ & Jewell, ST. **Assembling the pieces of a systematic review: a guide for librarians**. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield; 2017. Hardcover: 226p. 978-1442277014. Price USD\$90.00. Available from: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781442277014>

Finally, a book about systematic reviews for librarians!

While there is no shortage of Libguides, web resources and methods handbooks available on systematic review methodology, very few (besides [SuRe Info](#)) are intended specifically for information specialists, and resources on how to create or run systematic review services are virtually nonexistent outside of what is reported in the academic literature [1]. For this reason, *Assembling the pieces of a systematic review: a guide for librarians* fills an important gap as the first monograph (to my knowledge) to cover these topics in depth.

Written by a team of librarians, and edited by Margaret Foster (Texas A&M University) and Sarah Jewell (Rutgers University), this book is intended for “training librarians new to systematic reviews, for those developing a new systematic review service, for those wanting to establish protocols for a current service, and as a reference for those conducting reviews or running a service” [2].

Foster and Jewell guide the reader through the steps of the systematic review process, or as they describe it, PIECES (which stands for Planning, Identifying, Evaluating, Collecting and combining, Explaining, and Summarizing), which many of you may recognize from [Margaret Foster’s webinar series](#) of the same name, which ran from February to August 2017 [3]. The book is structured around the PIECES framework, with chapters on the following topics: introduction to systematic reviews; finding, evaluating and applying reviews in various disciplines; the reference interview; team dynamics and data management; database searching; grey literature searching; case studies of review questions and searches conducted to address them; study selection and critical appraisal; data extraction; writing; systematic review services; and librarianship and systematic reviews.

While different authors write each chapter, the voice and tone of the book remains consistent throughout. The book is well formatted, with an “Objectives” section setting the tone and expectations for each chapter, “Action Boxes” prompting the reader to complete small assignments in order to more deeply interact with the content, and a variety of very helpful tables peppered throughout. I also appreciated the effort made by the authors and editors to cover not only the disciplines of medical and health sciences, but also environmental science, social sciences, and even software engineering.

Readers will appreciate the practical aspects of many of the chapters, since they have a level of detail that is not always feasible in program description articles or webinars. For example, the chapter on systematic review services addresses multiple aspects of the systematic review service: librarian competencies, types of service models, and different libraries’ approaches to service provision (presented through case studies). The chapter also provides a logic model for conceptualizing service initiation, prompting the reader to consider and enumerate the rationale, aims, resources required, specific services to be provided, and measurable outcomes before launching their service.

Chapter 4, “Planning the Review Part 2: Team Dynamics and Data Management,” was my favourite. It addresses topics that are discussed infrequently in our methodological literature and which are often either learned by trial and error or by osmosis from more experienced librarians. When discussing project data management, for example, the authors describe systematic review management tools and their advantages. When recommending a tool, they highlight very important thoughts to keep in mind when sitting down with researchers in those initial reference interviews, including type of synthesis, desired software features, licensing considerations, and user training and technical support.

While I enjoyed the majority of the book and found it very helpful, should Foster and Jewell publish subsequent editions, I would love to see an entire chapter dedicated solely to critical appraisal. I found it

a little confusing to have it addressed in the same chapter as study selection, rather than after data extraction. Anecdotally, I think many librarians (myself included) feel that their critical appraisal skills could be improved, and having a chapter focused on the main concepts and tools for critical appraisal would be helpful in addressing this knowledge gap.

I would highly recommend this book to early career health sciences librarians or to health sciences institutions that frequently train MLIS students. More

experienced systematic searchers will be familiar with much of the content of this book; however, many of the tables could be quite helpful in framing conversations with researchers during reference interviews or training, and would be worth reviewing. For directors or managers seeking to formalize or improve a systematic review service, this book will also be of interest.

Statement of Competing Interests

No competing interests declared.

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The views expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of my employer CADTH.

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