Reviewer’s report

**Title:** Boolean versus Ranked Querying for Biomedical Systematic Reviews

**Version:** 2 **Date:** 2 September 2010

**Reviewer:** Nancy Wilczynski

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Manuscript Review BioMed Central

Title: Boolean versus Ranked Querying for Biomedical Systematic Reviews

The purpose of the study was to explore the effectiveness of using ranked retrieval compared with Boolean querying for the purpose of constructing a systematic review – an important question.

The revised paper is much easier to read. The methodology and results are clearly presented. I only have minor suggestions for revisions - listed below.

**Minor changes:**

1. **Conclusions in abstract:**

   Outcomes of experiments suggest an interactive query-development process that uses a hybrid ranked and Boolean retrieval system has the potential for significant time-savings over the current methodology can used in the systematic reviewing process.

   Should be:

   Outcomes of experiments suggest an interactive query-development process that uses a hybrid ranked and Boolean retrieval system has the potential for significant time-savings over the current methodology used in the systematic reviewing process.

2. **3rd paragraph of the Introduction:**

   Metadata is the citations include information on each abstract, such as date of publication, language, and index terms.

   Should this be:

   Metadata of the citations include information on each abstract, such as date of publication, language, and index terms.

3. **3rd paragraph of the Introduction:**

   The current (late 2009) sizes of the major repositories are: approximately 18 million citations for medline and 11 million for embase, each growing by
approximately 2,000 per day; and more than 2.6 million records for psycinfo. Update these figures for 2010 – for instance Medline now has 20 million citations.

4. 2nd paragraph of Section 4:

To perform ranked retrieval experiments, we used an open-source search engine called Zettair9 which has most popular ranking functions implemented.

Should be:

To perform ranked retrieval experiments, we used an open-source search engine called Zettair9 which has most popular ranking functions implemented.

5. 3rd paragraph of Section 5:

Even without replacing the Boolean paradigm, we believe there are improvements that can be made to the search process by incorporating aspects of the ranked-retrieval search process; in particular, the simple query forms, and the use of a ranking schema to quickly determine

This sentence appears to be incomplete.

6. Legends for Figure 5 should be increased for readability.

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.