Author’s response to reviews

Title: Clarifying differences between reviews within evidence ecosystems

Authors:

David Gough (david.gough@ucl.ac.uk)

James Thomas (james.thomas@ucl.ac.uk)

Sandy Oliver (sandy.oliver@ucl.ac.uk)

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Authors’ response to reviewers’ comments 2nd May 2019

We are very grateful for the thoughtful comments of the reviewers. We have revised the paper to take account of the comments.

David Gough, James Thomas and Sandy Oliver

REVIEWER 1

This is a really interesting paper and it is good to see these ideas presented in such a coherent and concise way. It is clear that systematic reviews are evolving in a number of ways and this thinking around Evidence Ecosystems is welcome. I wondered if the concept of the ecosystem could not be made a little clearer. For instance- how is it different to what others refer to as context? While I am not a fan of things being defined by what they are not, this may be helpful here.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE

Thank you for the kind words. We have edited the text has been edited as suggested to distinguish the evidence ecosystem as a system and other aspects of context.
REVIEWER 1

Also, I wondered about the idea that the knowledge producers (reviewers) seem to be being thought of as a unitary group. I would suggest that this is far from the case and that review teams vary greatly, often to good effect and are more than a tokenistic advisory group that meets once or twice in the process. Perhaps a note to this effect and how it chimes with the overarching ideas presented here would be helpful.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE

We have edited the text to clarify that that producers of research can be very varied.

REVIEWER 2

Overall, this is a very interesting and comprehensive commentary on the current state of systematic reviews. I offer a few suggestions for revision.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE

Thank you for the kind words.

REVIEWER 2

(1) The section entitled "Evidence Ecosystems..." (pg. 3) is a powerful and interesting introduction to your topic, but your actual Introduction section (pg. 1) is boring. Consider moving this introduction paragraph to the interior of your "Evidence Ecosystems..." section. It is important to inform the reader that this paper is an update to a previous paper, but that information does not need to be in the first sentence of the manuscript.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE

The mention of the 2012 paper at the very start of the paper has been deleted as suggested. The change of order is an interesting suggestion but we fear that this might lead to confusion. We have therefore kept the more open to confusion compared to the current more straightforward order of presentation.
REVIEWER 2

(2) Please describe the profession/position of Helga Nowotny (pg. 3, line 44). She is not well known to all readers.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE

We have explained that Professor Nowotny is a sociologist

REVIEWER 2

(3) The "Structure and Components of Reviews" (pg. 19) and "Breadth, Depth, and 'Work Done' By Reviews" (pg. 21) sections are far less comprehensive than the "Review Aims and Approaches" section (pg. 7). The "Breadth, Depth..." section is particularly short, with a discussion of rapid reviews and a limited bulleted discussion of the resources required to conduct reviews (pg. 22). Consider eliminating the "Breadth, Depth..." section, moving the rapid review discussion to the "Structure and Components of Reviews" section (as a rapid review is a type of review), and eliminate or expand the bulleted resources discussion. Simply listing four bulleted points about resource use is not very useful for the reader.

AUTHORS’ RESPONSE

We agree that these two final sections were short and not in balance with the rest of the paper. For the section on ‘Structure and components of reviews’ we have added more detail. For the section on ‘Breadth, depth and Work done’ we realized after reading your comments that the text on ‘A dynamic temporal approach to reviews’ should be in this section. We have also deleted the bulleted list. We think that these changes are a significant improvement to the paper and there is not now a need to combine the two sections. But we also do not see the issue of components of a review to be conceptually the same as the work done. It is possible to have single component reviews that create much ‘work done’ yet have quite slight multicomponent reviews.