Reviewer’s report

Title: Librarians as methodological peer reviewers for systematic reviews: results of an online survey

Version: 0 Date: 29 Apr 2019

Reviewer: Kelly Blessinger

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DOCUMENTATION OF SOURCES/BACKGROUND INFORMATION/LITERATURE REVIEW

The authors aim to gauge the involvement of medical librarians in the peer review process for systematic reviews or meta-analysis manuscripts for journals. While the authors include many references in the discussion section of their paper, they do not start out with a robust literature review. The use of some of the same sources in the discussion used as an introduction would help the reader to better frame this research. This is especially helpful if they are not as familiar with medical research. For example, more background could have been given regarding what a systematic review/meta-analysis is, and what differentiates it from a literature review article. They could also include articles regarding how peer reviewers are typically identified. Additionally, any literature that demonstrated the typical involvement of medical librarians in the systematic review/meta-analysis process at a local level would be helpful.

METHODOLOGY

The authors pilot tested their instrument and had an expert in the field review it. They distributed the survey to three medical librarian listservs, and had a great response rate. They mention several times that they had 300 librarians who completed the survey, yet they only mention 291 responses to their most answered question. Their percentages also depend on how many participants answered the particular question, which is not consistent throughout. Perhaps this can be made clearer to the reader.
PRESENTATION/ANALYSIS/LOGIC OF ARGUMENTATION

The authors write very clearly with no noticeable errors. One slight tweak regarding the writing is to add "analysis software or programming language" at the end of this sentence: "The data was extracted and analyzed using Excel and R." As it is written, it could be misread as a typo. It is easy to follow the analysis of their survey results and the arguments made in their discussion and conclusions. They did find some clear results, such as the indication that the more experience a librarian has, or they more they have been asked to peer review. It was also interesting to see the listing of journals that more actively recruit librarian peer reviewers. Depending on style used, I am more accustomed to periods falling inside of quotations rather than outside as these authors have submitted this manuscript.

RELEVANCE TO ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIELD

This study involved a logical line of inquiry. As the authors state, the number of systematic reviews published have increased 2500% since 1990, thus. a very relevant topic to investigate. The authors also mention that publishers of biomedical journal editors have expressed interest in improving the quality of these reviews. Yet, their survey showed that not many librarians were involved in the peer review process for journals, but would be willing to participate. They also give several possible suggestions for editors to engage this base of potential peer reviewers to make this more actionable.

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