

## **Guidelines for Including Systematic Reviews and Evidence Synthesis Activities in Dossiers**

Per the Final Report for the Systematic Reviews and Evidence Based Synthesis Services at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Library (September 2024, see Appendix), this document offers guidance on including systematic reviews or evidence synthesis (SR/ES) activities in dossiers and incorporates principles outlined in the [Statement on Promotion and Tenure to the Library Faculty at UIUC \(April 2022\)](#).

SR/ES activities are particularly relevant to a candidate's librarianship or research, and the depth of engagement provides the basis for determining where to place this work within the dossier. As with all activities, faculty members should weigh the relative impact of their contributions when choosing how to best present their case in the narrative sections. If their SR/ES contributions made an impact through librarianship or research, they are strongly encouraged to present their SR/ES work. Correspondingly, if activities were comparatively minor, candidates should not feel obligated to use space in either section that would be better used to present more impactful work.

### ***Within Librarianship:***

SR/ES requires specialized and current library information science (LIS) expertise and the ability to work collaboratively, which readily aligns with the Library's expectations for excellence in librarianship as 1) well-designed/delivered, 2) collaborative and inclusive, and 3) reflective and evolving, as described in our Statement on Promotion and Tenure. Non-exhaustive examples of SR/ES activities that could be attributed to librarianship include providing consultations and guidance on: research projects, research questions, project planning and management, review types, best practices, tools, databases and resources, search terms, development of protocols for SR/ES projects, initial search strategies, and advocating for reproducible practices, such as inclusion of the search strategy in an article appendix or online repository. Activities initiated through the evidence synthesis oversight group, such as instruction and serving as a referral for more in-depth consultations, may also be appropriate to include. Additionally, examples of strategic activities that align with the Library's expectations for excellence in librarianship include:

- developing and delivering SR/ES services that advance the mission and goals of the University Library and campus community
- training or mentoring other library faculty, staff, and students to develop expertise providing SR/ES services,
- providing SR/ES programmatic leadership within the Library

This work would be described in section V.B. Candidate Librarianship/Instruction Statement, and if especially core to the faculty member's position, potentially in the shorter III. A. Summary of Librarianship and Instruction. Candidates may wish to briefly mention publications in which they were acknowledged but would not list them within the dossier. It is expected that candidates are following ICMJE's authorship criteria (see *Within Research* section) and as such, all co-authored work is considered research.

### ***Within Research:***

Representation of SR/ES activities as research indicates that a faculty member has established extensive SR/ES expertise and served as an expert collaborator for work that goes beyond typical

librarianship contributions. These activities required substantial commitment on the candidate's part to apply their high-level of SR/ES expertise on a research project which may take months or years. This level of activity is consistent with the Library's Statement on Promotion and Tenure, which expects that faculty's research contributes to the development of their professional identity and be characterized by originality, depth, and significance. This level of activity is further reflected in the Final Report's criteria, which used the [Internal Committee of Medical Journal Editors recommendation on defining authorship](#) as a reference point, for listing publications:

- The librarian is an active member of the research team; AND
- The librarian provides input/advice on the research question, search terms and strategy, SR/ES methodology and reporting; AND
- The librarian designs and documents the search strategy; AND
- The librarian writes the search section in the methodology of the resulting article; AND
- The librarian reviews the article for accuracy prior to submission of the article; AND
- The librarian is listed as co-author.

Candidates should utilize Section II. Publications and Creative Works to list their works once published or formally accepted for publication and describe their contributions in Section V. A. Candidate Research Statement. As with other collaborative research endeavors, candidates should craft their research statement in a way that allows evaluators to understand their degree of responsibility by ensuring that the nature of their role, the depth and uniqueness of their expertise, and the importance of their participation in the success of the project is clear in the statement.

This guidance does not attempt to cover all possible SR/ER-related activities. For example, contributions such as membership on or chairing of the evidence synthesis oversight group may warrant inclusion in Section III. Service. Candidates with questions are encouraged to consult with others, such as a member of FRC/PTAC or the AUL for Academic Affairs, about their specific circumstances.

### **Document history:**

Established November 2024 after drafting by HJI and review by FRC, PTAC, the AUL for Faculty Affairs, and members of the Evidence Synthesis Working Group.

### **Appendix:**

As sent by Megan Sapp Nelson on September 4, 2024, to LIBFAC-AP-L

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Systematic Reviews and Evidence Based Synthesis Services at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library

**Final Model and Pathway to Develop a Systematic Review Service**

After completing a literature review, survey of faculty currently involved in systematic reviews at UIUC Libraries, and developing three potential models for a systematic review service, discussion in the Library Faculty Meeting, and consideration from the administrative team of the University Library, Model 2: Functional Affiliation was identified as the chosen model for implementation of an Evidence Synthesis Service, given the cultural environment and staffing constraints of the University Library.

### *Model 2: Functional Affiliation*

Under this model, those individuals with a functional affiliation to evidence synthesis are formally identified and tasked with participation in developing and leading the evidence-based synthesis service for the UIUC Library. Affiliating individuals who have specific functional responsibility for evidence-based synthesis projects ensures that those who are most directly impacted by the policy and tools developed by the service are responsible for implementing those policies and tools.

The structure of the group overseeing the service will be identified as part of the formal charter process for the group. This group may be designated a team, working group, task force or other structure; the designation remains to be determined. The group that oversees the service will report to the administrative team. The reporting line will be decided by Library Administration.

### **Membership**

Systematic reviews or evidence synthesis should be either a line item within the position description for the given position that is affiliated with the evidence synthesis service or has been added to that individual's portfolio of work through formal discussion between that individual and their supervisor. Individuals participating in the evidence synthesis service team need to have a history of consulting or collaborating on systematic reviews or meta-analysis projects. The rationale for this level of formality is two-fold: It ensures that individuals that are closely involved in systematic reviews and evidence synthesis methodologies and the processes supporting them are members of the systematic review service. It also means that individuals with deep insight into the existing state of systematic reviews and evidence synthesis on the UIUC campus have direct input on policy and procedures that directly impact their work.

Any personnel of UIUC Library may participate in systematic reviews or evidence synthesis, regardless of specific language in position descriptions. Each faculty member can choose whether to take on a specific evidence-synthesis project.

### **Role of the Systematic Review Team**

The systematic review team has three primary responsibilities.

- 1) Develop or subscribe to tools that can facilitate the creation of evidence synthesis projects. Examples may include intake forms for projects, workflows, in-person and online workshops

intended for students, faculty and librarians, Canvas hosted modules intended to provide support for those learning about the research methodologies, subscribing to ES/SR software such as Covidence or Rayyan, and training opportunities for other librarians.

- 2) Provide support for evidence-based synthesis projects that need assistance with finalizing search strings and protocol development. The existence of this group does not guarantee that all projects will be offered expert search support. It will provide a structure for discussions of workload distribution and sustainable support for projects across all departments on campus.
- 3) Keep metrics on the demand for evidence synthesis services and make requests for support commiserate with that demand.

Note: Participation as a member of this group does not indicate that the member is guaranteeing a certain level of participation on evidence-based synthesis projects. Some members may provide consultations only, while others may participate on research teams, as their own work portfolio and available time allow.

### **Triage model**

With the implementation of this structure, liaison faculty will be the first line of discussing evidence synthesis projects with faculty and graduate students of their individual liaison units. Liaisons should have the knowledge of key disciplinary databases and keywords to guide researchers in the development of an initial evidence synthesis protocol. Liaisons should be familiar with the evidence synthesis models and research question formats that are commonly used in their liaison areas. Training should be provided to all liaisons to help them prepare to take on the initial consultations for this process. At the point where the research teams wish to have further support or consultations beyond the initial protocol development, including the development of search strings, liaisons refer projects to the evidence synthesis team. An online intake form that serves as a centralized submission portal for prospective librarian involvement in evidence synthesis projects will be developed and hosted by the evidence synthesis team. The form can be completed either by members of the research team requesting assistance or a liaison librarian making a referral. All existing information including draft protocols, exemplar article citations, and proposed keywords associated with the proposed project should be included in the form submission to make discussion of the protocol among the ES team possible.

The evidence synthesis team will then evaluate the proposal for level of support needed and decide based upon available faculty bandwidth as to whether, and to what extent, each proposal will be supported.

### **Policy related to systematic reviews and evidence synthesis**

According to the work of this task force, there are currently no policies in effect within the University Library promotion guidelines that dictate how a systematic review or evidence synthesis project should be recorded in a dossier. Due to the overlap of librarianship and research that is inherent to evidence-based synthesis, guidelines for determining how a project should be recorded in the dossier should be

implemented. This task force proposes that evidence-based synthesis related publications be listed as research when the following criteria are met for librarian participation in a project:

- The librarian is an active member of the research team.
- The librarian provides input/advice on the development of the research question, keywords and protocol development.
- The librarian provides advice on protocol registration.
- The librarian designs the search strategy.
- The librarian writes the research/ search methodology section of the resulting paper as well as provides the reproducible search strategies for the appendix.
- The librarian reviews the article for accuracy prior to submission of the article.
- The librarian is listed as co-author.

This task force proposes that projects that involve consultation on review types, guidance on best practices or tools, and databases and initial search strategies be recorded under librarianship in the dossier.

A further option that could be considered for adoption by PTAC is an additional interdisciplinary collaboration statement and section of the dossier where all evidence-based synthesis and any other interdisciplinary collaboration, including those rising out of funded research, are recorded and described. In that case, all evidence-based synthesis could be collocated in one section of the dossier and the individual library faculty member could describe the total impact of their work in evidence-based synthesis on campus with a comprehensive statement. A similar statement is currently used at University of Illinois-Chicago to appropriately contextualize the work of their Health Sciences liaisons in their dossiers.

We recommend referring to <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/defining-the-role-of-authors-and-contributors.html> as these policies are developed.

These policies and guidelines do not currently exist and would need to be addressed by PTAC and FRC.

### **Training and Resources**

We recommend that any librarian who is assigned liaison responsibilities in the University Library receive training on various evidence synthesis methodologies, research question frameworks, and running consultations for evidence synthesis projects.

To facilitate the creation of a skilled liaison group, the task force recommends that a systematic review “road show” or intensive on-site training be hosted for any interested UIUC Library liaisons and pre-professional graduate assistants.

Multiple groups that provide this type of service were contacted in Spring 2024. As of Spring 2024, the

cost to bring a road show from University of Michigan was as follows:

\$500 per presenter – speaking fee. (It was estimated that we would need 3 to 4 speakers to run a multi-day workshop.)

Per diem and travel expenses for each speaker.

An estimated cost of the road show would be \$7,000-\$10,000.

An alternative route is to have members of the faculty at University Libraries apply to attend the workshops held at University of Michigan or University of North Texas. In that case, there is a nominal registration fee for each faculty member sent, as well as per diem and travel expenses for each of the University Library faculty members who attend. These workshops have competitive enrollment and limit the number of faculty from one institution that is enrolled per workshop. Therefore, this option would take longer to achieve a fully trained faculty group.

We also recommend a ½ time graduate hourly position be associated with this service to support development of educational materials, workshops, and support for managing requests for evidence synthesis projects. This would be an expenditure of approximately \$17,143.20.

### **Software**

UIUC Library also needs to invest in software to facilitate evidence-based synthesis projects to decrease the workload of library faculty members and improve accuracy and reduce bias in evidence-based synthesis projects.

Library IT solicited quotes for two of the most commonly used software applications, Covidence and Rayyan.

Rayyan and Covidence have two different models for subscription at the institutional level.

A base level campus license for Rayyan is \$12,000 annually.

Covidence charges per review. Using the 2020-2024 reviews published by authors at UIUC as determined by Scopus (72 reviews published since 2020; 43 reviews published in 2023-2024), we can make an educated guess that approximately 50 -75 reviews are ongoing at any given time. If we elect to only get a license for library faculty who support evidence synthesis, then we can make an estimated guess that librarians are conducting 25 – 30 projects annually across the entirety of the Library. With these assumptions, the cost of an institutional subscription is:

- \$289/project or \$867 for 3 projects with unlimited collaborators/users.
- For 25 review projects (providing for librarian projects only), the total would be about \$7225.
- For 43 review projects (providing access for the estimated number of projects on campus), the total would be \$12,427. This is an annual cost.
- Group pricing starts at \$11,500 per year and would cover 100 review projects/year and 150 full-time employees.

There is also the possibility of a campus license for Covidence, but we do not have confirmation of the cost of that license at this time.

Therefore, the anticipated initial expenditure to start this service is approximately \$40,000. It can be started for less but will take longer to be able to develop a sustainable model of service due to lack of tools or resources.

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