

# Reflective Practice for Professional Development through a Collaborative Systematic Review Project

Misa Mi<sup>1</sup>, Jie Li<sup>2</sup>, Lin Wu<sup>3</sup>, Wendy Wu<sup>4</sup>, Yingting Zhang<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine Medical Library, <sup>2</sup>University of South Alabama Biomedical Library, <sup>3</sup>Texas A&M University Medical Sciences Library, <sup>4</sup>Wayne State University Shiffman Medical Library, <sup>5</sup>Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey RWJ Library of the Health Sciences

## BACKGROUND

Learning is most effective when it takes place in a context as a collaborative rather than an isolated activity. Experience serves as the basis for learning and cannot take place without reflection.<sup>1</sup>

A team of 6 health sciences librarians collaborated on a systematic review (SR) project about mobile resources used by health professions students.<sup>2</sup> Upon completion of the project, they reflected on their involvement in the project for reflective practice as a means of professional development. Grounded in Donald Schön's reflective practice as a conceptual framework,<sup>3</sup> the study was to investigate the nature and impact of their experience and participation in the project; how changes (if any) took place in terms of their knowledge, attitude, and skills; and how they developed an awareness of their own actions and the effects of their participation on their professional development. The goal was to determine how involving in conducting a SR helped them grow and develop professionally as an individual and as a group through self-reflection.

## METHODOLOGY

A phenomenographic approach, providing a lens through which to explore different understandings of a phenomenon,<sup>4</sup> was used to explore the variations in librarians' experiences in conducting a SR project, to identify the multiple ways in which they came to understand SR and their roles, and to examine their perspectives of their professional growth and development through self-reflection.

Five health sciences librarians across institutions participated in the study.

Interviews with a structured questionnaire including open-ended or probing questions served as prompts for participants to reflect on various experiences in conducting the SR project.

Participants' responses were examined and classified into conceptual categories for themes. To increase the trustworthiness of the qualitative research, the participants as investigators were involved in content analysis for the purpose of data triangulation and formative and summative check of coding credibility.

- Participants are 5 academic health sciences librarians from five libraries, each with various job responsibilities and with at least 11 years of work experiences
- SR training ranged from no training, some training, to formal training through MLA's CE course
- SR-related experiences ranged from only performing literature search, data management, to involvement in the entire SR process
- Figures 1-4 and table 1 present the identified key themes and categories of perceptions of their learning and professional development through the SR project

Figure 1: Motivations to participate in the collaborative SR project

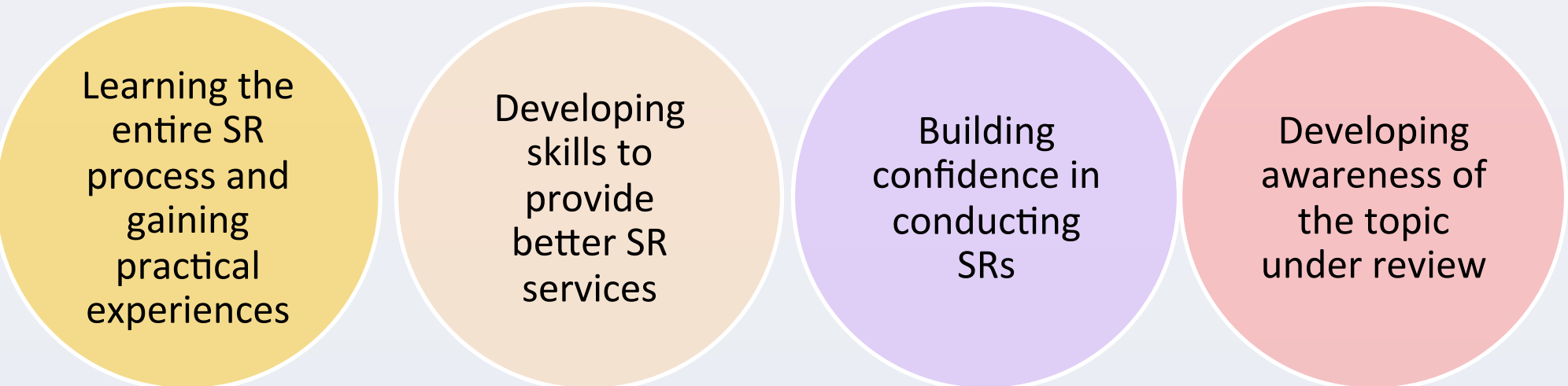


Table 1: Reflection on experience in conducting SR project

Theme	Category	Selected Comments
Experiential learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved knowledge of SR and the SR process and gaining new skills</li><li>• Becoming more confident of conducting future SR projects</li><li>• Challenging and self-directed learning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participating in the project enabled me to understand more about how a systematic review article was produced.</li><li>• Though I attended a course on SR and also helped faculty and students with SR literature search, doing this SR exposed me to a totally new experience, learning every step of doing SR.</li></ul>
Enhanced self awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding of what takes to complete the project</li><li>• Time commitment</li><li>• Importance of communications among team members</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When conducting a SR as a whole by ourselves, it is much more challenging and time consuming than I expected.</li><li>• I kept several versions of our methodology data extraction in Dropbox which might cause confusion.</li></ul>
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaborating on a national level</li><li>• Sharing collective wisdom</li><li>• Facilitating collective learning and creative thinking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It provided the opportunity to learn from the team members and the opportunity to challenge my knowledge as well.</li></ul>
Professional growth and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved ability to better provide services, instruction, and consultation related to SR</li><li>• Contributing to a SR project beyond literature search and data management</li><li>• Improved understanding of librarians' roles in SR and boosted confidence in conducting SR and seeking co-authorship</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This experience will definitely help me improve my services to our users on conducting SRs.</li><li>• I feel more comfortable asking to be included as a co-author for the manuscript.</li><li>• I will be more confident to give advice and consultation on SRs and more willingly to participate in SRs in more depth instead of just focusing on literature searching.</li></ul>

## RESULTS

Figure 2: Factors impacting the process of conducting SR project



Figure 3: Challenges encountered in conducting SR project

- Time constraints and schedule conflicts
- Variations in experiences and skills in conducting SR
- Finding a good tool for centralizing all files
- Consistent way of naming and organizing documents
- Variations in outputs by team members
- Technical issues with web conferencing

Figure 4: Factors impacting outcomes of conducting SR project



## Advices for other librarians considering collaborating on a SR project:

- Finding the right people to form a SR team
- Researching on good collaboration tools for file sharing and video conferencing
- Understanding that a SR project is time consuming and challenging
- Effective communications and discussion over the course of the project

## CONCLUSIONS

- Librarians' involvement in the entire SR process have led to changes in knowledge, attitude, confidence, and skills in conducting a SR.
- Self-reflection on one's own experience with SR bridges a disconnect between formal SR training, continuous professional development and growth, and reflective and improved practice of librarianship.
- Self-reflection on one's action serves as an alternative way of promoting health sciences librarians' professional development.

## REFERENCES

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