

Background: Searching for relevant studies is an essential step in doing a systematic review and the starting point is developing and running bibliographic database searches. Locating studies is challenging: there are many databases available, terminology is different across countries and fields and many of the studies may not make it into the peer reviewed literature.

Method: Using 31 systematic reviews or maps published in the Journal of Environmental Evidence 2012-2016 we looked at the search methods to discover the range of databases searched. We then investigated whether the databases listed were bibliographic databases, if so, did they allow complex searching including free text field and controlled vocabulary searching.

Results: The results indicate a wide variety in number of databases searched, overall results show over 90 different databases listed in the search methods. No one database was searched in all of the systematic reviews or maps.