



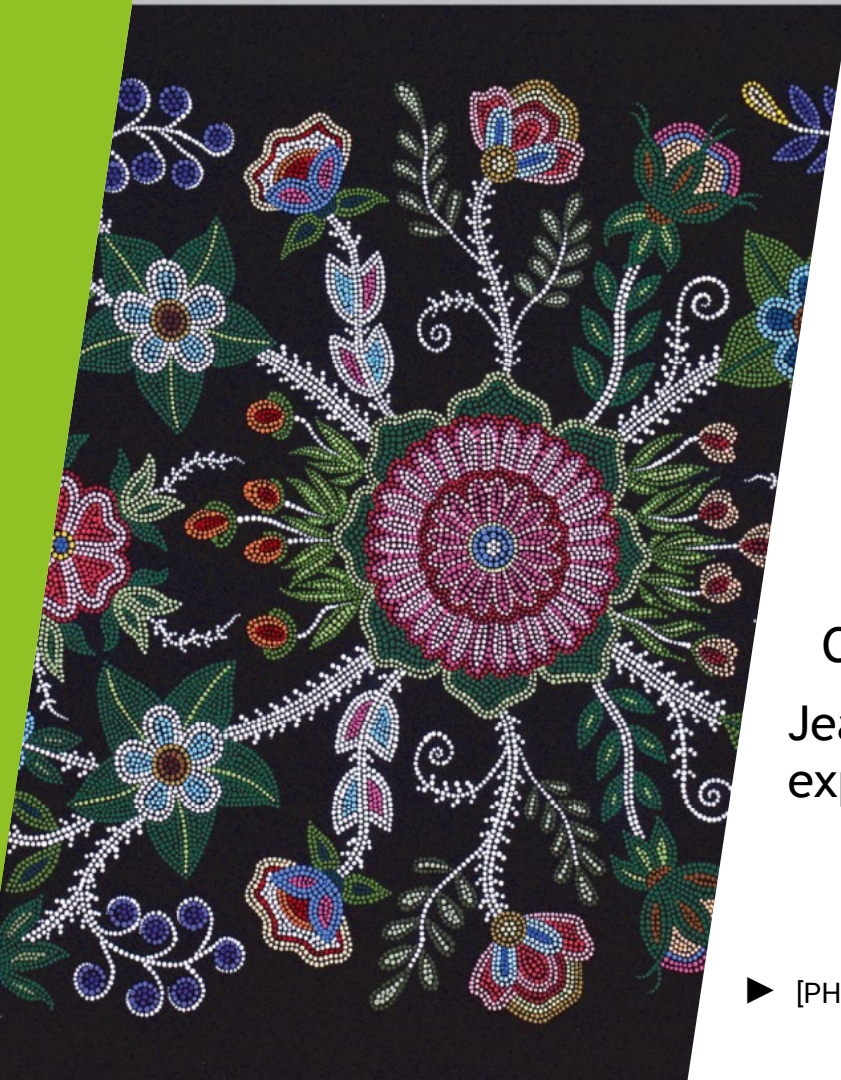
# Finding Solutions to Dysfunctions in Libraries: A Scoping Review

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## Territorial Acknowledgement

Call to action - reading suggestion!  
Jean, Michel. (2019). [Kukum](#). Libre  
expression.

► [PHOTO, LEFT: INFINITY BY CHRISTI BELCOURT]

# Indigenous affirmation University of Ottawa

We pay respect to the Algonquin people, who are the traditional guardians of this land. We acknowledge their longstanding relationship with this territory, which remains unceded. We pay respect to all Indigenous people in this region, from all nations across Canada, who call Ottawa home. We acknowledge the traditional knowledge keepers, both young and old. And we honour their courageous leaders: past, present, and future.



# Plan

What is a library dysfunction?

Scoping review methodology

- Identifying studies
- Using Covidence
- Hiring research assistants
- Collaborating

Preliminary findings



# Defining library dysfunction

In *The Dysfunctional Library: Challenges and Solutions to Workplace Relationships* (2017), Henry et al. describe a dysfunction as "problems that prevent libraries and librarians from achieving their shared goals" (p.165).

For the purposes of our study, we limited this definition to organizational issues (difficulties with communication, low morale, racism, harassment, bullying, ...).

We excluded issues that originated from library users (i.e. problems with patrons) or extraordinary events (i.e. pandemics).



# Scoping review methodology

A scoping review aims to address broad, complex and exploratory research questions to better understand phenomena

It is often a preliminary attempt to identify the nature and extent of available research

It uses rigorous methods to describe the literature in a field

Source: Grant & Booth, 2009

DOI: [10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x)

# Typical steps involved

Some methodological guidance:

- Arskey & O'Malley, 2005, DOI: [10.1080/1364557032000119616](https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616)
- Peters et al., 2020, DOI: [10.11124/JBIES-20-00167](https://doi.org/10.11124/JBIES-20-00167)

Steps involved typically include:

1. Identifying the research question
2. Identifying relevant studies
3. Selecting studies
4. Charting the data
5. Collating, summarizing and reporting results

# Details related to identifying studies

**What is the nature and extent of available research on library dysfunctions and, consequently, on proposed or tested solutions?**

Two concepts: dysfunction and libraries

3-part search strategy

Peer-reviewed using PRESS

Initial search done in Oct. 2023 across eight databases

LISTA, LLIS, Business Source Complete, PQ One Business,  
Academic Search Complete, Web of Science, Érudit, Cairn

Search updated in March 2025

Results exported and managed through Covidence



# Search strategy for LISTA (EBSCOhost)

1	DE "LIBRARY personnel" OR DE "BRANCH library personnel" OR DE "DEPOSITORY library personnel" OR DE "LAW library personnel" OR DE "LIBRARIANS" OR DE "LIBRARY pages" OR DE "LIBRARY personnel with disabilities" OR DE "LIBRARY technicians" OR DE "MINORITY library employees" OR DE "NATIONAL library personnel" OR DE "PART-time library employees" OR DE "PUBLIC library personnel" OR DE "RESEARCH library personnel" OR DE "RURAL library personnel" OR DE "SCHOOL library personnel" OR DE "SMALL library personnel" OR DE "SPECIAL library personnel" OR DE "WOMEN library employees"
2	DE "LIBRARY administration" OR DE "ACADEMIC library administration" OR DE "CHILDREN'S library administration" OR DE "PUBLIC library administration" OR DE "REGIONAL library administration" OR DE "RESEARCH library administration" OR DE "RURAL library administration" OR DE "SCHOOL library administration" OR DE "SMALL library administration" OR DE "SPECIAL library administration" OR DE "LIBRARY administrators" OR DE "LIBRARY directors" OR DE "WOMEN library administrators"
3	DE "COMMUNICATION in library administration" OR DE "LIBRARY planning"
4	TI(librarian*) OR AB(librarian*)
5	TI((library or libraries) N3 (personnel OR staff OR employee* OR worker* OR workforce OR administrat* OR director*)) OR AB((library or libraries) N3 (personnel OR staff OR employee* OR worker* OR workforce OR administrat* OR director* or communication* or planning))
6	S1 OR S2 OR S3 OR S4 OR S5

7	DE "WORK environment"
8	DE "ORGANIZATIONAL behavior"
9	DE "CORPORATE culture"
10	DE "LEADERSHIP"
11	DE "ORGANIZATIONAL communication"
12	TI((work* OR organization* OR organisation* OR corporate) N3 (culture OR environment* OR behavior* OR communication*) OR AB((work* OR organization* OR organisation* OR corporate) N3 (culture OR environment* OR behavior* OR communication*))
13	TI(leadership) OR AB(leadership)
14	S7 OR S8 OR S9 OR S10 OR S11 OR S12 OR S13
15	DE "ACADEMIC libraries" OR DE "BRANCH libraries" OR DE "CENTRAL libraries" OR DE "CHILDREN'S libraries" OR DE "PUBLIC libraries" OR DE "RESEARCH libraries" OR DE "SCHOOL libraries" OR DE "SPECIAL libraries"
16	TI(library OR libraries) OR AB(library OR libraries)
17	S15 OR S16
18	S14 AND S17
19	S6 OR S18

20	DE "WORKPLACE incivility"
21	DE "OFFENSIVE behavior"
22	DE "HARASSMENT"
23	DE "BULLYING in the workplace"
24	DE "CYBERBULLYING"
25	DE "EMPLOYEE morale"
26	TI(incivility OR civility) OR AB(incivility OR civility) TI(bullying OR harass* OR discriminat* OR mobbing OR cyberbully* OR backstab* OR cliqu* OR gossip* OR offensive) OR AB(bullying OR harass* OR discriminat* OR mobbing OR cyberbully* OR backstab* OR cliqu* OR gossip* OR offensive)
27	TI(trust OR mistrust OR distrust) OR AB(trust OR mistrust OR distrust)
28	TI(hostil* OR toxic* OR fear*) OR AB(hostil* OR toxic* OR fear*)
29	TI(dysfunction* OR conflict*) OR AB(dysfunction* OR conflict*)
30	TI(morale) OR AB(morale)
31	S20 OR S21 OR S22 OR S23 OR S24 OR S25 OR S26 OR S27
32	OR S28 OR S29 OR S30 OR S31
33	S19 AND S32

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32	OR S28 OR S29 OR S30 OR S31
33	S19 AND S32

# Using covidence

Subscription-based online service that facilitates many steps

- Screening titles and abstracts
- Screening full-text
- Extracting data

Many features to tailor settings according to review needs

## Review Summary

[Settings](#)[Export](#)

Import references

[7198 to](#)

Title and abstract screening

[2470 irrelevant](#)

Full text review

[154 excluded](#)

TEAM PROGRESS



392 DONE

19 CONFLICTS

6 ONE VOTE

93 NO VOTES

[Team settings](#)

RESOLVE

19

[Resolve conflicts](#)

[You've screened](#)

Extraction

[50 extracted](#)

## Full text review

[Bulk upload missing full texts](#)

Screen references 99

Resolve conflicts 19

Awaiting other reviewer 0

Excluded references 154

You have 181 studies ready for extraction. Let us show you how.

Filter

Tags

Add criteria

Add highlights

☐ All

Show abstracts

Display: 25

Most relevant

☐

#7749 - MORELAND 1993

MOVING A LIBRARY COLLECTION - IMPACT ON STAFF MORALE

MORELAND, VF; ROBISON, CL; STEPHENS, JM  
JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP 1993;19(1):8-11  
1993  
DOI: [10.1016/0099-1333\(93\)90691-W](#)

Include

Exclude

Full text

Abstract

[moving library collection.pdf](#) Primary

Full text uploaded by Ethel Gamache

[Manage full text](#)

Note

History

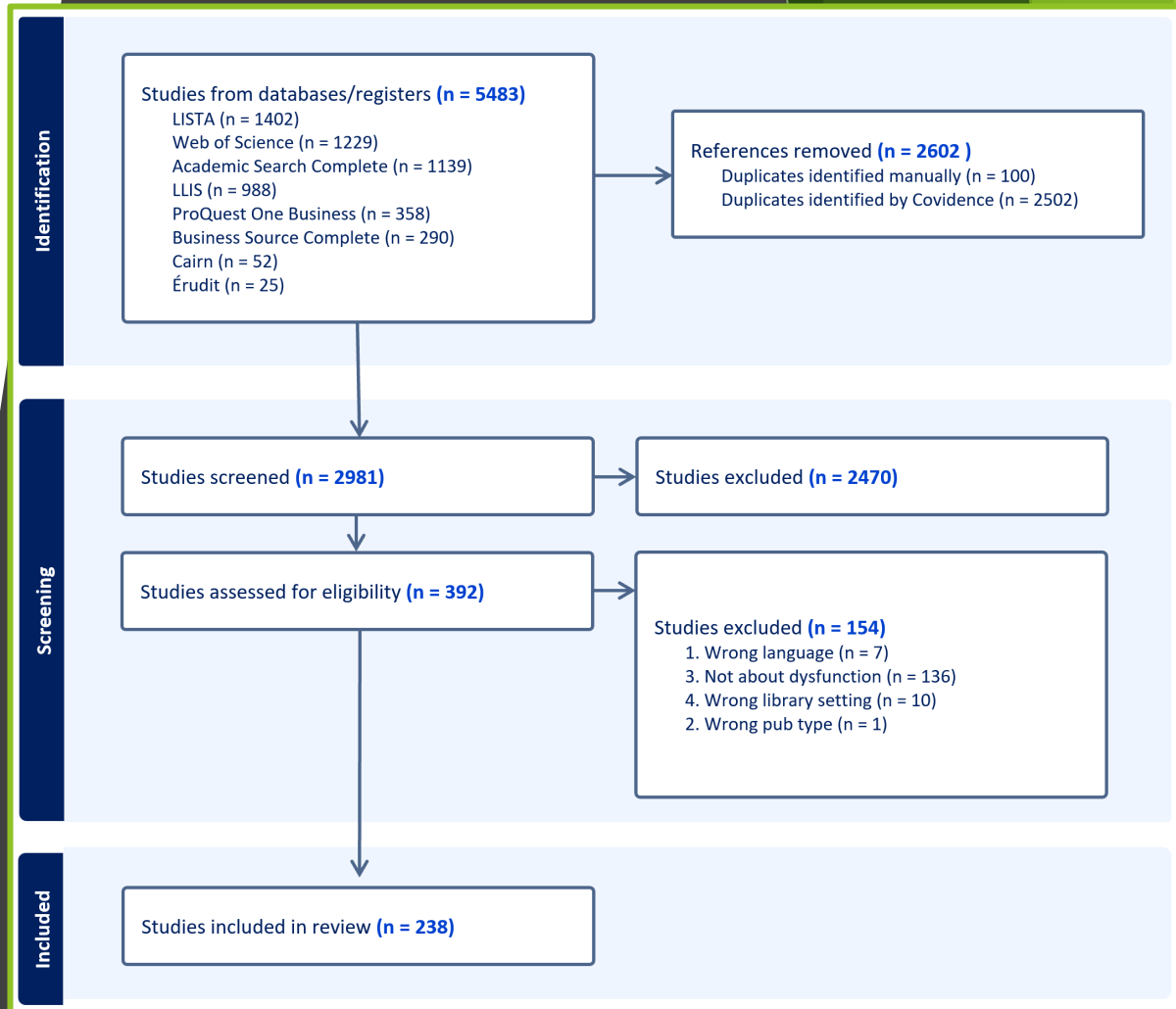
Duplicate

Move to screening

Need help?

# PRISMA Flow Diagram

As of April 14, 2025





# Hiring research assistants

Grant application and research assistants hiring process

Students or new LIS graduates - research is complex

Position posted through LIS schools and some listservs

Interviews - not too labour intensive for a contract, but enough to know the candidates well

- Candidates had to screen titles and discuss decisions
- We selected top two candidates (many were excellent)
- We valued communication and self-explanation - key value that supported the team's work through the months.

# Collaboration

Four researchers working collaboratively but remotely, sharing a same time zone

Pilots and training

Clear communication, relying on emails and meetings

Weekly standing meetings

- We meet weekly and work together
- No need for discussion points
- Ensures timely communication and constant progress

# Preliminary findings

## Investigation details

Dysfunctions in libraries have been discussed for decades and multiples solutions are explored in the literature

With our extraction process, we are uncovering:

- General information (author, date, type of document, (if article, type of article; if empirical, type, study design, number of participants)
- Country or region
- Dysfunctions (up to five)
- Solutions (up to five)
- Document relevance
- Notes
- Setting information (type of library)

## Preliminary findings

### Documentation data

As of April 20, 2025, extraction is completed on almost a quarter of our results. This sample is too small to extrapolate results, but let's look at it as a snapshot of where we are at this point.

#### Documentation data:

- Range date of documents: 1977 - 2023 (Median: 2013)
- Type of documents: 83 % articles (mostly empirical - surveys, questionnaires, interviews), 17% editorials
- Mostly academic libraries, public libraries far second
- Geography: predominantly from North America

## Preliminary findings

# Extraction data: Issues

The main issues aggregated are:

- Low morale
- Harassment
- Systemic discrimination (racism, sexism, religion)
- High pressure and stress
- Conflicts
- Communication issues
- Inequality



## Preliminary findings

# Extraction data: Solutions

Some proposed solutions are:

- Clear policies (including harassment policies) and transparency
- Developing a collegial culture
- Clear goals
- Addressing conflicts and pain points
- Anti-discrimination laws
- Knowledge sharing
- Continued training (to better manage changes) and mandatory training (to counter poor behaviours)
- Conflict management practices

# Challenges

This project is taking longer to accomplish than anticipated

- Limited dedicated time

Necessity of a data update

Number of records larger than a previous review had predicted

Textual extraction is a considerable amount of work

# Concluding remarks

Appreciation for funding

Importance of a great team for a long-term project

Standing meetings were a game-changer

Dysfunctions have solutions - problems can be addressed and situations can get better

Librarians are facing similar issues and working on solutions

Empathy and our own lived experience with researchers!

Scoping review for librarianship issues

Hope this work will be beneficial for librarians and librarianship

# Thank you

Contact the presenters:

- Éthel Gamache, [ethel.gamache@concordia.ca](mailto:ethel.gamache@concordia.ca)
- Patrick Labelle, [plabelle@uottawa.ca](mailto:plabelle@uottawa.ca)

Acknowledgment is given to the Concordia Library Research Grant 2023-2024 for supporting this research endeavour.

Thanks to the Forum Steering Committee and to all attendees.

# Questions?



Ethel,  
you have screened **964** studies



Patrick,  
you have screened **709** studies