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# DECOLONISING METHODS



# INTRODUCTION

Hi I am John!

Clinical Librarian for 10ish years. Faculty Librarian for Science and Technology/Health and Medicine at Lancaster University for 4

Leading on Systematic Review Support and Supporting Decolonising at Lancaster

Lead for ARC-NWC Information Science Sub-Group

Included in teams as methods advisor, and introducing decolonised methods to systematic search strategies.



# BACKGROUND: SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS



Starting from 2021. We improved our Systematic Review provision.

Created guidance and pathways for researchers undertaking Systematic Reviews, using feedback and evidence-based best practice.

Embedded best practice in teaching by working with departments.

Tried to simplify a complex subject, allowing researchers to work 'per protocol' and produce higher quality reviews.

Systematic reviews are experiential in nature, so only included what was immediately useful.

Very popular! Most published reviews have some element of the guidance.

<https://lancaster.libguides.com/SystematicReviews>

Can we do the same with **Decolonising?**

# WHAT IS DECOLONISING. OUR FIRST STEP

The Elevator Pitch:

*"The recognition that knowledge and practices in Higher Education have often been formed and shaped by aspects of Western colonialism and racism, and this makes Higher Education an unwelcoming social and intellectual space.*

*Decolonising raises a complex set of questions that go beyond merely extending reading lists, the forms and effects of the assessments, literatures, **theories and methodologies** we promote, as well as how we interact with fellow scholars, students and other universities.*

*It is about acknowledging the legacies of slavery, colonialism and empire by addressing systemic inequalities relating to all aspects of Higher Education"*

(With thanks to Dr Sunita Abraham and Dr Richard Budd)

# INVESTIGATION

*Engaged with Decolonising Networks at Lancaster:*  
Joined the 'Decolonising Lancaster University'  
networks: <https://wp.lancs.ac.uk/decolonising/>

*Student Feedback:* Asked for student feedback in 121 sessions, through Staff Student Committees.

*Best Evidence Research:* Researched 'Best Evidence' for searching. Read a lot of blogs and academic papers. This formed an initial 'Living LibGuide'



# SOME RECOMMENDED READING

[Recalibrating the scope of scholarly publishing: A modest step in a vast decolonization process | Quantitative Science Studies | MIT Press](#)

[Beyond Web of Science and Scopus there is already an open bibliodiverse world of research – We ignore it at our peril](#)

<https://farhadinfo.medium.com/> [Farhad Shokranehs Medium Blog](#)

# WHAT WE LEARNT?

## *From Student Feedback*

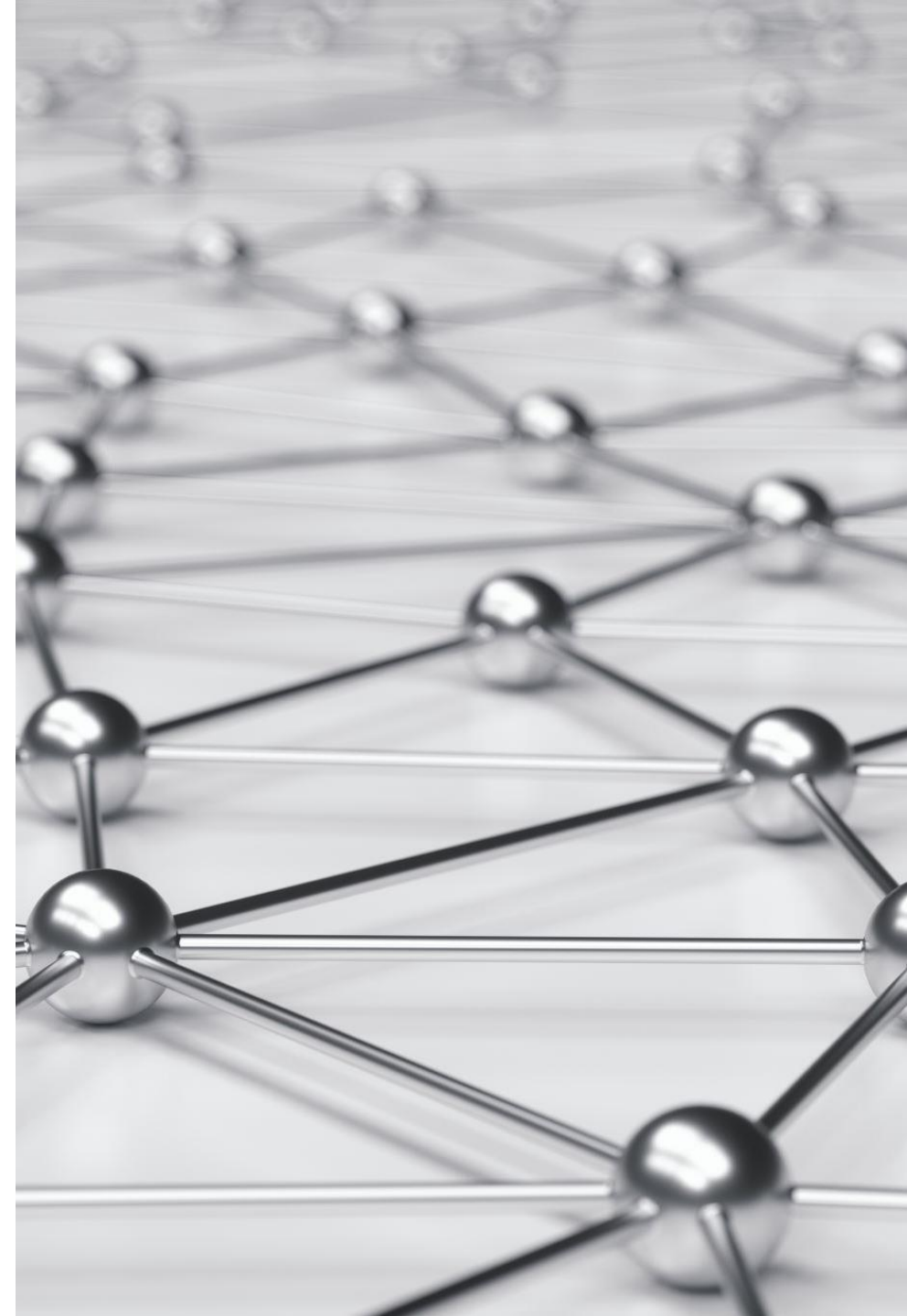
The Resources don't work: Many of our systematic review search strategies do not retrieve key evidence when searching a Global Topic

Many students from Lancaster are distance learners, and the searches can often be global and focused on the Global South.

## From Decolonising Networks

The responsibility for decolonising lies with the expert, not with the staff, student or researcher from 'a global south' or historically colonised country.

Librarians absolutely have a vital role in decolonisation





# WHAT WE LEARNT?

From Best Evidence Research

A traditional literature search can miss large numbers of papers in a EBSCO+Scopus+Web of Science Search

Even researchers from the global south do not search global south topics in a decolonized manner

Including Grey Literature and Open Access resources is key to “*Decolonizing Literature Searching*”.





# WHAT WE DID? METHOD

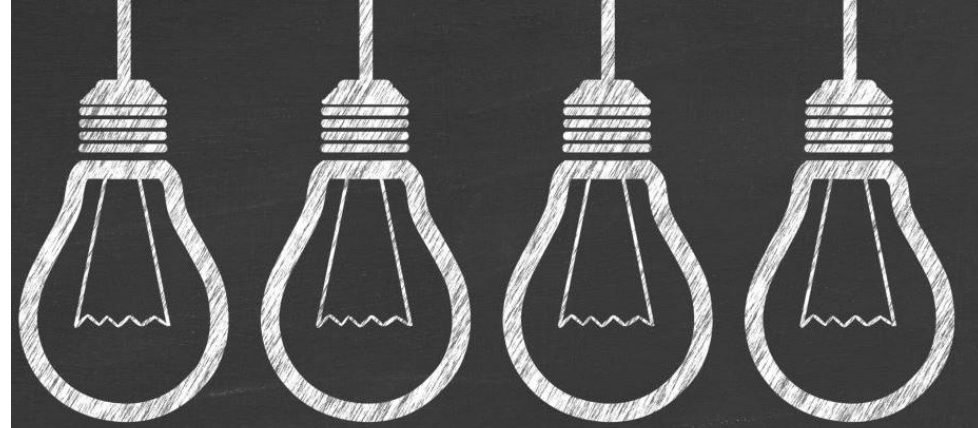
'Decolonising from the ground up'. Role of the Librarian.

We produced a new Decolonised Searching LibGuide and Grey Literature Guidance.

We started to produce 'pathways' to searching and embed this guidance in teaching and search strategies

Demo: [Home - Decolonising Literature Searching - LibGuides at Lancaster University](#)

Demo: [About - Grey Literature - LibGuides at Lancaster University](#)



# WHAT WE DID? CONTENT

Purchase and promoted decolonised resources.  
Collections such as Africa Commons that include  
Global South grey literature.

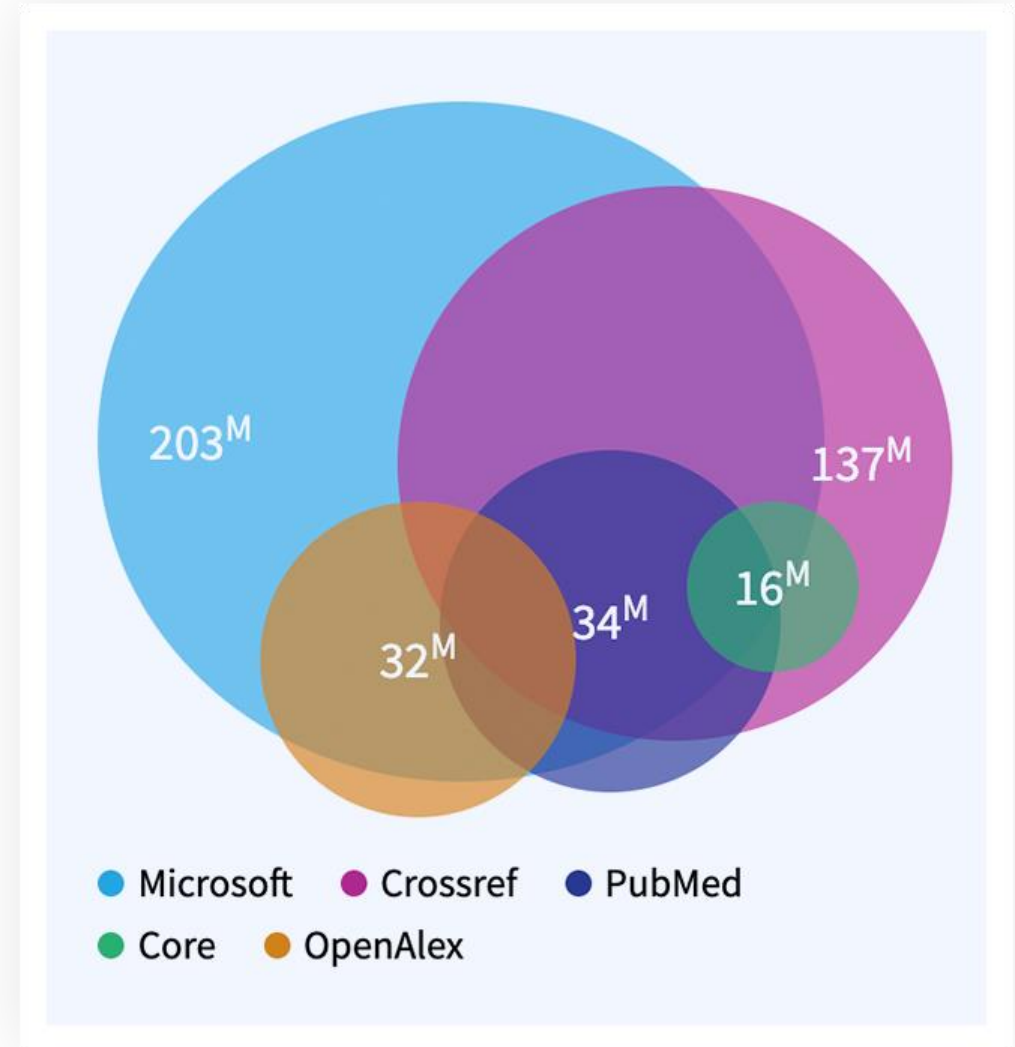
Purchased and promoted databases that index  
Open Access, Open Journal Systems or  
worldwide grey literature.

Integrated these into Search Strategies.

Demo: [Overton.io](https://overton.io)

Demo: [Policy Commons](https://policycommons.org)

Demo: [Lens.org](https://lens.org)



# EASY WINS

Investigate resources that index Open Access

Increase support for Grey Literature searching

Consider Promoting 'Decolonised Search Strategies'

You never have to mention decolonising in practice.  
Decolonising is in effect just 'Good Librarianship'



# ONGOING

Student Horizon Scanning: Funded student positions identifying additional 'Decolonised Resources'.

'Deconstructing Courses': Further workshops on Decolonising the Curriculum.

AI and ChatGPT: Forming a regional AI working group, as AI and ChatGPT has a future use (and possible risks) in decolonisation.

Completing Guidance: All guidance in place and embedded 'as default' for 23-24

# SOME OUTPUTS

[Decolonising of Grey Literature – YouTube](#)

[Using Overton to Decolonise Research – Overton Blog](#)

[Decolonising the library and grey literature: Interview with John Barbrook. Grey Lit Cafe PodCast](#)