

# “The Death of Expertise” our part in its ~~downfall~~ resurrection

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# Outline

- Experience, emotion, evidence, expertise
- Value of information
- Scenarios
- Conclusion



# Experience

*“Beware a craftsman who claims twenty years of experience when in reality he’s only had one year of experience twenty times.” Chinese proverb p.36*

*“Experts stay engaged in their field”*

# Emotion

- The post-truth (or post-factual) world
- Caroline Weinberg: “We can’t assume the evidence speaks for itself ... we need to speak for the evidence. **All of the evidence produced by science can be destroyed by someone with a good anecdote.** The only way to counter a compelling story is with a compelling story. **We need to bring the world into the conversation of science”** [Global Evidence Summit](#), 2017
- [Cochrane Crowd](#): “citizen scientists”.



# Evidence

“The use of evidence is a specialized form of knowledge that takes a long time to learn”



# Misunderstanding or misuse?

## Wakefield and the MMR vaccine

*“But the media repeatedly reported the concerns of this one man, generally without giving methodological details of the research, either because they found it too complicated, inexplicably, or because to do so would have undermined their story.”* [Ben Goldacre](#), 2010

<http://www.badscience.net/2010/01/the-wakefield-mmr-verdict/>

# “It’s a known fact”

The screenshot shows a webpage with the following layout:

- Header:** "SALT CONSUMPTION HAS A SWEET SPOT" in teal text.
- Navigation Menu (left):** Overview, Research Areas, Facilities, People, Research Office.
- Main Content (center):**
  - Research highlight:** "Salt consumption has a sweet spot" with a photo of Professor Martin O'Donnell.
  - Text:** "Too little and too much are both harmful, researchers find" and "Results from the largest study of its kind ever conducted -- involving 18 countries and more than 100,000 people -- indicate that the current recommended maximum sodium intake for the population is actually too low and may even be unsafe. However, high sodium is also harmful, so an 'optimal' range is the best target."
- Right Sidebar:**
  - Research highlight archive:** "Read all our research highlights"
  - Research areas:** "Want to do research at NUI Galway? Read our research areas."
  - Research blogs and podcasts:** "Read our latest research blogs, webcasts and podcasts"
  - Engagement Counter:** A circular graphic with the number "630" and a list of social media metrics: Picked up by 38 news outlets, Blogged by 11, Tweeted by 372, Mentioned by 1 weibo users, On 32 Facebook pages, Mentioned in 4 Google+ posts, Highlighted by 1 platforms. Includes a "Click for more details" link.

O'Donnell, M., Mente, A., Rangarajan, S., McQueen, M.J., Wang, X., Liu, L., Yan, H., Lee, S.F., Mony, P., Devanath, A. and Rosengren, A., 2014. **Urinary sodium and potassium excretion, mortality, and cardiovascular events.** *New England Journal of Medicine*, 371 (7), pp.612-623.



# What is expertise?

“An expert is someone who has made all the mistakes which can be made in a very narrow field” (Niels Bohr)

**Depth of knowledge** on a specific subject

Not “a box of factoids” (p127) – a thorough **understanding** on how a system works

Stay **engaged** in their own field, with a weather eye on related disciplines

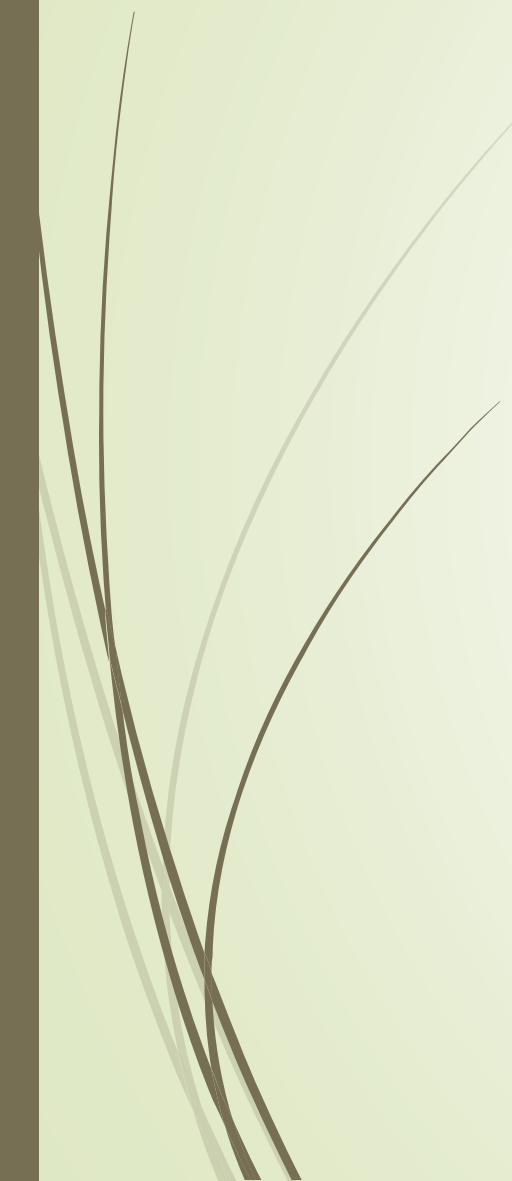
Ability to **think critically and use evidence** on their subject

What **“quality”** looks like in their field





# Protecting quality

- Self-policing/peer reviews
  - Standards for entry
  - Professional associations/ bodies
- 



# Value of information

- Aimed at reducing waste in research
- If I know the answer to X will it **improve decision** Y?
- What does it cost (in every sense) **not** to have the answer?
- Reduces **uncertainty**, fills a **gap** in knowledge

# 3 Scenarios – rationale for change

## ► Staff

*“Trials showing statistically significant results are more likely to be published than those with negative findings. They are also **more likely to be published quickly, in more than one place, in English, in high impact, indexed journals, and cited by others.**”*

Knoll, T., Omar, M.I., Maclennan, S., Hernández, V., Canfield, S., Yuan, Y., Bruins, M., Marconi, L., Van Poppel, H., N'Dow, J. and Sylvester, R., 2018. [Key steps in conducting systematic reviews for underpinning clinical practice guidelines: methodology of the European Association of Urology](#). *European urology*, 73(2), pp.290-300.

## ► Students

*“The reasons for not using bibliographic databases are **primarily lack of skills on information searching, lack of time and low degree of motivation** for implementing evidence based practice in general.”*

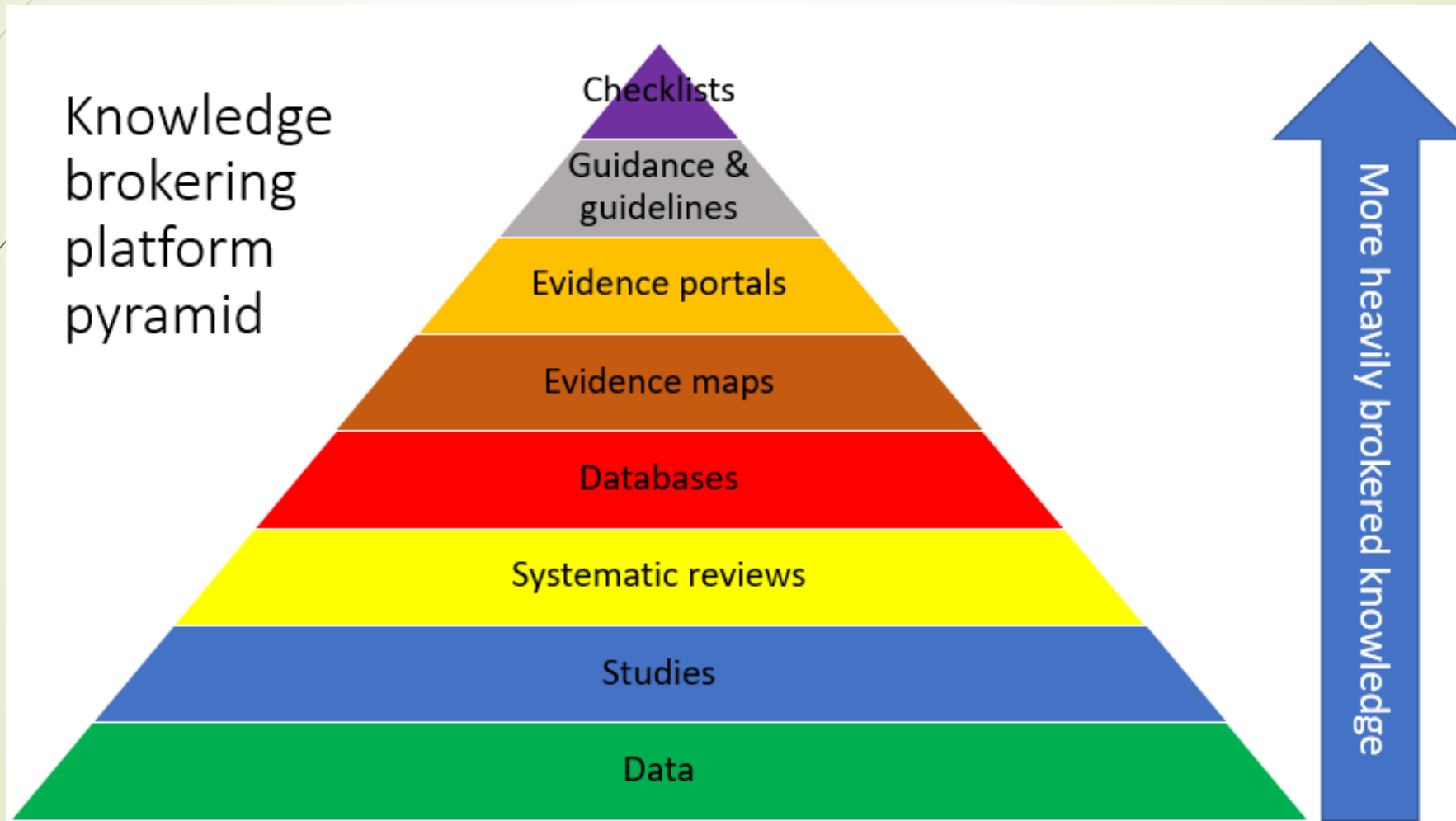
Alving, B.E., Christiansen, J.B. and Thrysoe, L., 2018. [Hospital nurses' information retrieval behaviours in relation to evidence based nursing: a literature review](#). *Health Information & Libraries Journal*.

## ► Public

*“Libraries have a fundamental role to play in order to train citizens, and **to give them the tools necessary not just to access information, but also to understand and analyse it**”*

Glòria Pérez-Salmerón, 2018: Libraries must change their mindset. IFLA interview, available at: [https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/topics/libraries-development/documents/gps\\_interview\\_-\\_livres\\_hebdo.pdf](https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/hq/topics/libraries-development/documents/gps_interview_-_livres_hebdo.pdf)

Howard White, 2018: CEO Campbell  
Collaboration: How should we summarize  
bodies of evidence? The emerging evidence  
architecture for knowledge brokering.





# What roles can Librarians play in Knowledge Brokering?

“While good-quality health information is a key component for decision-making, it needs to be packaged and communicated in an effective way to policy-makers, the end-users.”

Blessing, V., Davé, A. and Varnai, P., 2017. Evidence on mechanisms and tools for use of health information for decision-making. WHO



# Key message for change

Knowledge brokering: librarians must bring the “Slow Food” movement to their information services.

A “Slow Information” movement that promotes a world in which people pause and go beyond the headlines to make sense of the information they use for decision-making, and the librarians role in making this feasible.



Thank you!

Nichols, Tom (2017). ***The death of expertise: The Campaign Against Established Knowledge and Why it Matters.*** OUP, 9780190469412.