

# INTELLIGENCE INSIDER

Your Oxford Health Libraries' monthly newsletter



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## [My name is Bertha A. Calles Cartas](#)



Critically appraising peer-reviewed journal articles may feel intimidating. This perception could arise from the constant messaging that some topics are difficult to comprehend or from our own belief that we don't fit the scholarly mould. Everyone can develop critical thinking skills. We need them not just to appraise academic material but to evaluate sources of

information and its content, such as the news and news outlets. Critical appraisal is often associated with expertise in statistics and numbers. However, one of the main important aspects to appraise are biases, which are ["systematic errors introduced into sampling or testing by selecting or encouraging one outcome or answer over others"](#).

Let me consider some reports on the current situation between the occupied territories of Palestine and Israel to show you some biases. Some social media users are reluctant to take a stance on the [apartheid regime](#) and [genocide](#) in Palestine. We keep hearing that it is [complicated](#) and requires skills and knowledge we cannot develop in our lifetime.

The search for publication bias is crucial across disciplines, including healthcare, history, and law. Having many publications on favourable results and none on unfavourable, doesn't indicate that unfavourable outcomes did not occur. The availability of them was rather limited. This can significantly distort the findings in systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Editorial boards follow rigorous protocols to publish studies. However, sometimes bias can dangerously come in the way to decide not to publish important research. Look at the most recent case of the [Harvard Law Review declined an essay by Palestinian doctoral candidate after it had been initially approved](#). Similar to academic papers, news reports can contain biases in terms of what journalists choose to include or exclude. The reporting [on the release of Palestinian and Israeli hostages](#) exemplifies this.

Bias can creep in when collecting data. Qualitative research relies heavily on conducting interviews. It's crucial to question the methodology, data collectors, and potential question bias. Here's an analysis of potentially biased questioning in an interview with [a nurse discussing her experiences in Gaza](#). Another sampling problem is [ascertainment bias](#), which leads to an inaccurate representation of the actual population being studied. Let's consider that labelling any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic is offensive to all Jewish individuals. We want to know if Jewish critics of Israel are considered when assuming that all Jewish people will take offense, even if they are [Holocaust survivors](#) or [rabbis](#).

It's important to identify biases in reporting the composition of the studied population. The portrayal of Palestinian people as Muslim by most major media reporters overshadows the [Christian Palestinian communities](#), receiving minimal attention. This might lead to conclude indicate that the nature of the longstanding conflict is the clash of two religions. Insufficient information about the specific makeup of the population being studied could lead to wrong conclusions.

Apart from the data sources, it's crucial to investigate the potential omissions resulting from excluding specific literature or limitations in our search strategy. If you're interested in finding literature about references to the Palestinian population, a book by [Roald Dahl](#) might not be the obvious choice, but it could be the perfect fit. Our library team can help you develop systematic searches to identify all the relevant literature.

Critically appraising the evidence highlights the impact we make as professionals and as members of our society. [Ahmed Alnaoug](#) demonstrates the fatal consequences of biases in media coverage, and [Dr Ben Goldacre](#) illustrates the dangers of bias in medical science.

You might have a defined viewpoint on Gaza, but [self-censorship](#) is not confined to individuals and can be observed in [large institutions too](#).

Critical appraisal is one of the information literacy training we offer within our service. If you want to find more, contact us for a training session.

In this issue, you will find information on how to access ebooks and a couple of invites to our upcoming craft events for staff and for their children.

**All you wanted to know  
about ebooks but never  
dared to ask.**

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# CHRISTMAS CRAFTS


DECEMBER 18, 13:00-14:00  
UPPER READING ROOM,  
WARNEFORD HOSPITAL LIBRARY

 Celebrate

 Learn

 Network

 Play

 Recycle



# Christmas Kids Crafts

AT WARNEFORD LIBRARY


21st December 2023,  
13:30-14:30  
Upper Reading room

Email us to reserve your spot:  
[library.enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:library.enquiries@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

Children must be accompanied by one adult.



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The next edition will be published in December 2023.