

# **Management and Use of Grey Literature in Special Libraries**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This research exposed Management of Grey Literature in Special Libraries. The purpose of it is to identify types of grey literature, examine methods of acquisition, processing, preservation and utilization. In addition, to ascertain management challenges and strategies for improvement. The findings revealed that appreciable size and variety of grey literature resources are available in most libraries but proper management is where problems lie. The major methods of acquisition are donation/gift and standing order deposit for staff. Classification is the main method through which grey literature is processed, while cataloguing, indexing and abstracting are neglected in most cases. It was also found out that the major methods employed by most of the libraries for preserving grey literature are the use of shelves with labels and vertical files collection with content descriptions. The popular access points are print lists and shelf guides. Some of the challenges encountered with the management and accessing of grey literature resources in the area include lack of national bibliography for grey literature, as well as unwillingness of originating bodies to release copies of documents which topped the list. Recommendations were proffer by the researcher.*

**Keywords: Management, Grey Literature, Special libraries, Uses and Digital Age**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Grey literatures (or gray literature) are materials and research produced by organizations outside of the traditional commercial or academic publishing and distribution channels. Common grey literature publication types include reports (annual, research, technical, project, etc.), working papers, government documents, white papers and evaluations. Organizations that produce grey literature include government departments and agencies, civil society or non-governmental organisations, academic centres and departments, and private companies and consultants (Amanda, 2015).

Grey literature may be made available to the public, or distributed privately within organizations or groups, and may lack a systematic means of distribution and collection. The standard of quality, review and production of grey literature can vary considerably. Grey literature may be difficult to discover, access, and evaluate, but this can be addressed through the formulation of sound search strategies. In the words of Weintraub (2011) 'Grey Literature referred to publications issued by government, academia, business, and industry, in both print and electronic formats, but not controlled by commercial publishing interests, and where publishing is not the primary business activity of the organization'. According to Mason (2012) 'the grey in grey literature referred to the brain's grey matter since so much of it is highly intellectual, and is significant for research and development in many subject areas. It is literature that is not usually attainable through conventional channels.'

Academic generally refers to issues pertaining to educational institutions; primary, secondary or tertiary level. Strictly, it is limited only to the affairs of tertiary institutions such as universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and other postsecondary schools. Based on these the term "academic library" refers to libraries of tertiary institutions such as universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, e.t.c. Similarly, Ekere (2010) describes academic library as any library attached to post-secondary or tertiary institutions.

The main purpose of Special libraries is to support the actualisation of the objectives of the institutions they serve. Consequently, university library is to support the objectives of the university, which is to promote teaching, learning, research and community services. College libraries are expected to support the major objectives of the college, which is to provide instructional materials that support training of highly skilled middle-level manpower. The services of Special libraries broadly are: user education (orientation/ instruction) services for the users; inter-library loan/ connection services by organising library network to ensure users having enough materials; abstracting and indexing services to enable users identify and locate materials relevant to their work; bibliographic services to enable users locate library materials easily and quickly; cataloguing services to enable users identify and locate library collections; reference services to assist users in searching for and retrieving appropriate/ required materials; information services to users who require information for meeting their needs; and circulation services, which comprise services such as users registration, charging and discharging, shelf guide/marks, bindery, photocopying/reprographic, library displays, computer/online services and, current awareness services (CAS). These services are provided with the use of information resources including literature in various fields of interest among which is grey literature.

However, some general problems with management of grey literature should be discussed. Grey literature resources are produced in high number in Nigerian tertiary institutions, governmental and non-governmental organisations but yet, they are in limited circulation even within the institutions where they are produced. This may be as a result of incapability of libraries of such institutions in making available grey literature. However, the incapability of libraries in making available grey literature may have link with the nature of grey literature production and accessibility. Since grey literature is published largely by people or organisations who do not have publishing as their primary activity, such catalogues showing particular items produced over a particular period of time are usually non-existent. Grey literature is historically difficult to identify because much of it is un-indexed or unpublished (often both), and it is often locked deep within the 'hidden or invisible' web (Hlwiki, 2012). Grey literature should be a resource offered and sought on a far wider scale but the nub is discoverability. The major problem militating against acquisition of grey literature is where to locate their producers to subscribe and maintain the subscription.

Grey literature resources are mostly presented in substandard formats; this does not mean that they are substandard but the necessary technical detail of publishing for cataloguing and classifying library materials are lacking. The result is that such materials rarely receive proper treatment in the library. This obviously has implications for their storage, organisation and accession. Attached to the management challenges is the problem of fund constraints and management/staff's attitudinal problem. Many libraries are inadequately funded, this does not warrant expenses incurred in making available and managing grey literature resources. Even Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that do buy journals are severely restricted because they can't afford to buy as many as they would like (JISC Scholarly Communications Report, 2008). Although some grey literature resources are freely available in our society, the associated expenses in acquiring them are not catered for in most libraries.

## **MANAGEMENT OF GREY LITERATURE**

In recent years, technical and scientific literature has continued to grow, but grey literature reports now come from many different avenues. The following types of organizations issue grey literature. This list has been copied directly from Charles Augur's seminal book, *Information Sources in Grey Literature* (1989). They include Associations, Churches, County councils, Educational establishments, Federations, Institutes, Laboratories, Libraries, Museums, Private publishers, Research establishments, Societies, Trade unions, Trusts and, Universities.

Similarly, it is said that, Academics, postgraduate students, government agencies, professional associations, pressure groups, private companies, and research institutes are only some of the sources of grey literature. (The University New South Wales Home site accessed May 2012). Weintraub (2011) also stressed that 'grey literature is produced by government agencies, professional organizations, research centers, universities, public institutions, special interest groups, and associations and societies whose goal is to disseminate current information to a wide audience'. That, 'Perhaps the most popular grey literature that most of us have had occasion to use are government publications issued by the United States Government Printing Office (GPO) for the past 140 years'.

Librarians try to adopt pro-active approaches to finding locally-published materials, though Web-based searching, self-archiving and open access are helping to facilitate access. Specialized strategies are needed to facilitate identification and retrieval of grey literature. While some grey literature may be published eventually, and may be

easier to find, sometimes it never is. The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH) employs a number of health librarians and expert searchers and has developed extensive lists of sources. So also, Librarians at the New York Academy of Medicine produce reports on grey literature, which are useful for collection development and current awareness. (The wiki index, April 2012). AGRINDEX database is also available for life sciences and agriculture, but to date, very few grey literature documents are found in it. Energy and aerospace sciences documents are predominantly found in STAR (Scientific and Technical Aerospace Reports) through NASA (Mason, 2012). Additionally, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) developed the Universal Availability of Publications (UAP) program, which is supported by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and offers a wide range of educational, scientific, social, economic, and technical materials to anyone anywhere (Augur, 1989). The first step in either selection and acquisition or weeding of documents which Afolabi (1991) considered critical is appraisal of documents. This is because the usefulness of a document to the users will depend on their significance. According to Afolabi in appraisal and acquisition of archival records and manuscripts, 'the process of determining the significance of records and manuscript is referred to as appraisal. Appraisal here is the process of determining the significance of grey literature to users, with archival records and manuscripts inclusive. This process deserves an understanding of the entire organisation being served with particular reference to materials they need. After appraising grey literature, the next step is to select them based on the result of the appraisal (i.e. the significance of the grey literature to the users) and then acquire them through any (or more) possible sources or methods of acquisition.

The major ways of acquiring grey literature are through donation/free distribution by Governmental Organisations (GOs), Non-Governmental-Organisations (NGOs) and individuals, or bequeath by prominent personalities. Purchase, loan/exchange, and legal deposits mostly applicable to governmental organisations are also some of the ways of acquiring grey literature but not popularly practiced.

(Mukhtar, 2009). Similarly, in The University of New South Wales web site, accessed August 2018, it is said that most grey literature is free. But it is also contended there that 'some sources of grey literature, such as market research firms charge for access to their material'. Where there is a charge, one should not forget to check first a source like the Libraries Australia catalogue and other Special libraries catalogues one might find some copies free or for loan. Augur (1989) noted that 'grey literature is sometimes available through exchange agreements with other organizations or by subscription. That, 'annual subscriptions are expensive, but convenient, if complete subject coverage is needed'. Furthermore, he said that 'Other facilities use UNESCO book coupons, monthly standing orders, and a company such as Communicating Science, to find the information, or Crimdoc (crime-document), which maintains a criminology library database for grey literature from the criminology field. That currently, many items of grey literature can also be purchased through booksellers and subscription agents as the scope of the literature is growing.

### **EXPLOSION OF GREY LITERATURE IN DIGITAL AGE**

Informal communication is changing the notion of grey literature which is expanding to include e-mails, faxes, blog postings, wikis, RSS feeds and podcasts. An increasing amount of grey literature is now available on the Web in the form of Adobe Acrobat (PDF) document. Due to changes in the handling of grey literature, digitization projects and

self-archiving grey literature is now more visible and retrievable. (The wiki index, 2012). The proliferation of end-user driven content on the Web has increased the availability of grey literature.

Many organisations, institutions and agencies make grey literature available on their websites. There are also several grey literature databases which can be searched for references of data sources. (NDARC Report , 2010). It also stated that, ‘an increasingly important source of grey literature is the institutional repositories being created by universities world-wide. Most institutional repositories collect grey literature written by academics at their institution’. Web sites that index and collect grey literature are also growing in number. A useful starting place is the ACRL page on Grey Literature: Resources for Locating Unpublished Research. Trove is an Australian access point to resources found in the "deep web". Along with historic newspapers and old photographs, Trove includes references and full-text links to a range of grey literature resources. The Trove interface does not require any special knowledge of Library catalogues. WorldCat, which includes the holdings of over 20,000 libraries world-wide, includes grey literature. (The University New South Wales Home, 2012).

Mason (2012) said that ‘by the 1970s, grey literature was a recognized dissemination vehicle for many organizations and considered important reading throughout the world. The problem was, it was not getting any easier to find. Consequently, both the Commission of the European Communities and the British Library Lending Division came together to form a very important database for grey literature called SIGLE or System for Information on Grey Literature in Europe. It is a bibliographic database that covers non-conventional European literature in the fields of pure and applied sciences, and technology. By 1984, social sciences, economics, and the humanities were also included. SIGLE also gives access to discussion and policy documents, research reports, theses, working and conference papers, and some important official publications, with citations in English’.

The explosive growth of the web has had a significant impact on production, distribution, access and use of grey literature such that ‘the difficulty of retrieval, which used to be a distinctive feature of grey literature is now being minimized’. (Hlwiki Canada, Accessed April 2012). Similarly, The wiki index 2012 reiterate that ‘due to changes in scholarly publishing -ie. digitization projects, Google Book Search, open access and self-archiving, grey literature is now more visible and retrievable’. That, ‘the explosive growth of the web has had a significant impact on production, access and distribution of grey literature such that the difficulty of retrieval, which used to be a distinctive feature of grey literature . . . is now being minimized increasingly, institutional repositories -such as the University of Toronto T Space -archive faculty publications have made them (grey literature) available and searchable on the web. For example, materials may be crawled by Google scholar and/or Scirus’. It also maintained that, for systematic reviews, several search engines that crawl different portions of the Web should be searched as one-stop searching does not yet exist, and that, a person should start search for grey literature by scanning/browsing relevant government or institutional websites. And if a person is an information professional or searcher, he can try: GreyText -An Inhouse Archive of Documents on Grey Literature.

The All Academic site provides the full-text of papers delivered at academic conferences which used the company's software. ProQuest has a database Conference Papers Index which includes details of conference papers in the life sciences, environmental sciences and aquatic sciences. The entries in this database include ordering information to

obtain abstracts and copies of papers. Individual databases (such as Agricola, APA Full-Text, MEDLINE, ERIC and PsycINFO) index or abstract conference proceedings or individual papers. (The University New South Wales 2012). Weintraub (2000) observed that in today's electronic information environment, the Internet has become a major source for dissemination and retrieval of grey literature and often serves as a user's initial introduction to a topic area. That well designed Web sites give users access to a body of digitally produced grey literature that complements the existing body of print materials which is a major source of information retrieval and dissemination and that, there is growing acceptance to include references to relevant Web sites in scholarly papers and journal articles. Scientific publishing on the World Wide Web makes it possible to disseminate new information to a global audience in a matter of minutes. Ease of access and the speed in which extensive amounts of information can be made available, will have implications for the formation of science policy and public attitudes in a more profound way than in the past.

### **PROBLEMS OF GREY LITERATURE IN INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT**

Grey literature unlike other publications does not pass through formal publishing processes thereby poses challenges in its creation and in the integrity of its content, 'grey literature is material that is not formally published by commercial publishers or peer reviewed journals...' (NDARC Report, 2010). Grey Literature may not go through a peer review process, and its authority must be scrutinized (The wiki index, April 2012). Again, grey literature can be influenced in the process of creation or twisted by parental organisation that creates them in their favour even if it is not the right way. 'The danger of grey literature is that some of the "think tanks" which publish reports and working papers have their own political or social agendas. In a few notorious cases, organisations have been set up for public relations reasons to promote bogus research'. (The University New South Wales, 2018 )

The web is changing publishing processes. Similarly, there is a shift in the ways of publishing and acquiring grey literature towards electronic system of publishing and acquisition through web. It is a clear fact that this innovation is attached with its pros and cons. All librarians and information specialists have one or more stories about finding grey literature especially literature that has to do with confidentiality of an organisation. 'All librarians and information specialists have personal stories about finding elusive conference proceedings, abstracts and reports. The digital age has not completely changed that -not yet in any case' (The wiki index, 2012). 'Far more difficult to locate are unpublished conference papers, or conference proceedings that have yet to be published in book form. There are a number of databases which contain details (and occasionally the full-text) of papers from academic conferences. These can be some of the hardest forms of grey literature to locate. Where papers presented at an academic conference have been published as a book or as a special issue of a journal, these can be readily found in library catalogues (The University New South Wales Home site,).

Grey literature is elusive to find especially on the net. It is sometimes difficult to find on net because the method of organisation is not good enough. The functionality of the web as a search space is limited due to its methods of organization. 'The web is changing dissemination and publishing processes. However, findability on the web remains a difficult issue. While some Grey Literature may be published eventually, and may be easier to find, sometimes it never is... 'Fugitive', hidden, invisible or literature in the deep web may be on government sites, deep in archives, institutional repositories, theses databases, conference sites, associations. Open Access (OA) to

materials and the creation of institutional repositories has revolutionized publishing and the work of providing access to published works. Despite pivotal information trends like these, some digital and print materials are still hard to find and obtain.

The emergence of search engines has helped to index and make findable a lot of grey literature. But searching carelessly with Google creates other problems for information specialists as important documents can easily be missed. Even though the Web is estimated to be 500 billion -perhaps as high as one trillion pages, its functionality as a search space is limited due to its methods of organization. Important documents may be easily retrieved via search engines, but some grey literature may ultimately be hidden within results, down several pages or not visible at all due to a relative lack of popularity. Computer algorithms help to improve search engines.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The increasing demands on published material occasioned by the rapid rate of student's enrolment in universities calls for a change from the self-centered acquisition of conventional published materials to acquisition of grey literature especially the literature produce/circulate within the locality of the users. This is to augment the costly, scarcely and sparsely distributed published materials that are really seen in localities. This shift demands for efficient and effective management of grey literature resources to facilitate usage. Hence the study that investigated the management grey literature Special libraries in the digital age which produce and use large part of it carried out. The research discovered fair treatment of grey literature resources in most of the libraries studied and exposes where these libraries still needs to pay a closer attention to, as well as suggestions, with a view of improving management and use of grey literature and to harness the values of grey literature in libraries.

Based on the challenges of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Provision of national bibliography for grey literature.
2. Stipulation of good policy statements for acquisition and use of grey literature.
3. Digitization of the grey literature resources.

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