Towards a Prague Definition of Grey Literature

Joachim Schöpfel
Charles-de-Gaulle University Lille 3
Current definition

**Luxemburg**

“[Grey literature is] that which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers.”

**New York**

“[Grey literature is] that which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers i.e., where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body.”
Content analysis and survey

• Corpus: 35 original GL papers and TGJ articles 1993-2008 (11%)
• Selection criteria: papers with substantial debate on GL concept

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conference</th>
<th>GL1</th>
<th>GL2</th>
<th>GL3</th>
<th>GL4</th>
<th>GL5</th>
<th>GL6</th>
<th>GL7</th>
<th>GL8</th>
<th>GL9</th>
<th>GL10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total nb</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Corpus of GL communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>Vol 1</th>
<th>Vol 2</th>
<th>Vol 3</th>
<th>Vol 4</th>
<th>Vol 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Corpus of TGJ articles

• Online survey with 1,390 GL experts
• October 2010
• Average response rate 7.8%
Common usage but…

The New York definition of grey literature…

-remains useful
-needs revision
-is precise
-doesn't fit with new technologies
-remains relevant

-Strongly agree
-Agree
-Unminded
-Disagree
-Strongly disagree
△ between papers and survey

GL12 – December 6-7, 2010
Fallacies of the NY definition

• Over-broad
  Applies to items that are not part of the extension of the definition

• Lack of essential attributes
  Document, intellectual property, quality, collection, preservation

• Risk of circularity
  Grey is that which is not white (nor black)

• Risk of obscurity
  Grey is fugitive, ephemeral etc.
Are digital objects grey?

“that which is produced (...) in (...) electronic formats”

Data?
Emails?
Technical copies?
Wikis?
Blogs?
Tweeds?
Websites?*

RT @brandibuzzard: Not so thrilled about the lack of defense by the #KCChiefs --- but the Raiders miss the field goal haha l #football

The Social Network, brilliantly analyzed.


* What about snapshot copies?
Typology or quality?

- Are PhD theses grey?
- Are Master theses grey? And BA dissertations?
- (Where is the difference?)
- Some reports are grey, and some grey items are reports. What makes some reports turn grey?
- Is a working paper grey if nobody cares for it?
- GL beyond “works of the mind”?
GL without library?

- The problem with GL is a LIS problem
- Without collection and preservation, no GL
- GL is linked to (inter)mediation
- From library to institutional repositories: does it change anything?

- Does « grey » mean anything to the end user?
A new definition

Prague

“Grey literature stands for manifold document types produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats that are protected by intellectual property rights, of sufficient quality to be collected and preserved by library holdings or institutional repositories, but not controlled by commercial publishers i.e., where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body.”


Thank you!

Joachim Schöpfel
Charles-de-Gaulle University Lille 3
joachim.schopfel@univ-lille3.fr
++ (0) 33 688 35 01 47