

# Making Grey Literature Available through Institutional Repositories

**Nathan Rupp and Lee LaFleur  
Albert R. Mann Library; Cornell University**

## Grey Literature at Cornell

The Cornell University Library exists to support the three-fold mission of the University: research, education, and extension (Cornell is the land grant institution for the State of New York). It supports this mission through the services it provides and the material it collects; it collects material produced by the university itself as well as outside publishers. In recent years, university librarians have recognized that a significant amount of material worth collecting in support of the university's activities can be classified as "grey literature." Although grey literature has in the past been considered too ephemeral and marginal to spend time collecting, it is part of a communications process that, although separate from mainstream publishing, is just as important. Even though some information resources are created with nontraditional publishing methods does not mean that they are unimportant; often, these grey literature resources later move "into the mainstream of information products." (1) In addition to its general value in research, grey literature is particularly important in the sciences. "The quest for scientific knowledge is an evolutionary process in which every increment of new knowledge adds to, modifies, refines, or refutes earlier findings," and grey literature is an important part of this process. (2) To this end, librarians at Cornell, including librarians supporting the sciences, have determined that collecting grey literature is as important to supporting the university's activities as is collecting any other resource.

A recently published Cornell University Library report surveyed the types of grey literature currently being produced within the university. These included the physics pre-prints contained in the arXiv e-print service; documents created by Cornell University Cooperative Extension; working papers produced by programs such as the Cornell Food and Nutrition Policy Program and the Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies; and proceedings produced in association with a number of conferences sponsored by Cornell.

Conference proceedings are an important type of grey literature for a number of reasons. Conferences and the proceedings that document their programs are a valuable part of the scholarly communications cycle. The proceedings from conferences document the current state of research and provide a lasting record about what took place at a particular conference. Furthermore, proceedings enable research to be shared among those who were not present at a conference and serve as a point of reference for those who were in attendance. Many research findings presented at conferences and recorded in conference proceedings are not reported anywhere else. However, conference proceedings can be difficult for researchers and information professionals to identify, locate and acquire. Many times the groups that organize conferences are small and their events are not widely publicized. Even those proceedings collected by libraries can often be difficult to access due to lack of item level indexing, frequent title changes and the irregular and informal nature of their publication.

## Conference Proceedings Project

As the report surveying grey literature at Cornell was being researched, other library staff members had begun to think about how the library could provide online access to proceedings published in association with conferences held at Cornell. They designed a pilot project in which access to Cornell-produced conference proceedings could be made available online, and in doing so, identified a number of activities such a project would need to undertake. These included the identification of a set of conference proceedings with which to establish the project and the identification of a system with which to make the proceedings available online. Although conference proceedings are being published across a number of colleges at Cornell, the project focused on surveying conference proceedings produced by the Life Sciences libraries. To identify a small set of conference proceedings with which to begin the project, a number of Life Sciences librarians and faculty were interviewed. In the end, the proceedings for the Wine Industry Workshop, a wine production conference held annually in Geneva, New York, were chosen for the project.

## DSpace

Once the set of proceedings was chosen, a survey of the various digital library platforms available to provide online access to the proceedings was begun. This examination showed that Cornell was experimenting with a wide variety of digital library platforms. These included DLXS, developed by the University of Michigan and used by Cornell to support its Core Historical Literature of Agriculture and Home Economics Archive projects; DPubS, an open source digital library platform developed at Cornell and used to support Project Euclid; FEDORA, developed by the Digital Library Research Group in the Cornell Department of Computer and Information Science in partnership with the University of Virginia;