

## Access and Document Supply: a comparative study of grey literature

**Chérifa Boukacem**

University of Lyon, France

**Joachim Schöpfel**

Institut de l'Information Scientifique et Technique, INIST  
Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, CNRS France

### Abstract

The report addresses the different aspects of the accessibility and dissemination of grey literature in the digital age where the de-materialization of documents has led to a new paradigm that has superseded the intrinsic characteristics of printed material.

Based on the added value of grey literature for academic institutions, the report attempts to provide an analysis of the ongoing transformations, especially concerning the way in which research and development in the area of grey literature have become part of the open access movement.

In this context, we will analyse some of the major public supply services for the dissemination of grey literature: their typology, their strategic approach, and the special conditions and characteristics of their service. What are their projects with regard to grey literature and the open access movement? What is the impact of these projects on document supply, acquisition policy and the information system?

For the study, we selected five public institutions: the British Library (UK), the CISTI (Canada), INIST (France), KISTI (Korea) and the TIB Hannover (Germany). We excluded networks and corporate profit-based suppliers.

### Introduction

One characteristic of grey literature is that it is "often difficult to (...) acquire through normal bookselling channels" (British Library)<sup>1</sup> because it lies "outside of commercial circuits of publication and dissemination" (AFNOR)<sup>2</sup>. For those professionals and scientists who are desirous of gaining more information, the search for and acquisition of this kind of "underground literature" can be a time-consuming, sometimes expensive and even frustrating experience (see for example Hartley 2004 for conference proceedings).

Because of the importance of grey resources for scientific research and teaching, all major public document suppliers invest in collections and delivery services for theses, conference proceedings, reports and unpublished working papers. Some of them offer additional help for the identification and localising of these often poorly recorded documents.

These special collections and their bibliographic controls induce significant costs to libraries, and "grey supply" is often more expensive than the traditional delivery of items from "white" publications.

Today, libraries and document supply services are confronted with the open archive (OA) movement and have had to adapt to it. The following paper gives an overview of the grey holdings and delivery services of five major document suppliers – the *British Library* (BL), the *Canadian Institute of Scientific and Technical Information* (CISTI), the French *Institut de l'Information Scientifique et Technique* (INIST), the *Korean Institute of Scientific and Technical Information* (KISTI) and the *German National Library of Science and Technology* of the University of Hannover (TIB) – and describes their reactions and projects in the OA environment. This overview is completed by an analysis of the position of the international lobby organisation of information services, the ICSTI.

### Some remarks on OA and grey literature

The origins of the short history of open access are known: free peer-reviewed journals like Harnad's *Psychology* or Guédon's *Surfaces* and article repositories such as Ginsparg's *ArXiv* or Harnad's *CogPrints*

---

<sup>1</sup> <<http://www.bl.uk/>>

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.afnor.fr/portail.asp>>