

MetaGrey Europe, A Proposal in the Aftermath of EAGLE-SIGLE

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Abstract

In the aftermath of EAGLE, the objective of the MetaGrey Europe project is to organize a new network of European leading organisations for the collection and dissemination of grey research literature, to facilitate the access to European grey literature through a unique web-interface (metasearch engine), to increase its international visibility and to safeguard the former SIGLE records and integrate them in the new network in an OAI-PMH compliant format. The communication describes the project scope, assesses the resources, contains a risk analysis and an outline of costs and benefits and provides information about project management, communication strategy and planning.

Introduction

2005 is a crucial year for the European grey literature. The EAGLE concept doesn't work any longer. The input to the SIGLE database definitely stopped in April, and the EAGLE association is to be liquidated.

EAGLE was a co-operative network for identification, location and supply of grey research literature. A non-profit association formed by the national centres participating in SIGLE, it produces and provides access to the bibliographic database SIGLE. All documents referred to can be obtained through the national SIGLE centres.

The decline of the EAGLE concept has four reasons:

(1) Internet: The 1985 concept of the SIGLE database has not been able to keep up with the rapid development with the Internet and the online resources. Even if FIZ Karlsruhe developed a web-version of SIGLE, the database production didn't adjust to the possibilities offered by the new technologies of information:

- No direct online cataloguing in a shared database,
- no metadata harvesting,
- very few records of e-documents,
- no direct access to full text,
- no links to other resources.

(2) Organisational structure: The highly centralized structure (national input centres, a central operating agent) was unable to open the network easily to new and/or important producers of grey literature on the national or international level. Furthermore, the formalized functional structure was not adapted to the need of flexible and rapid decision taking and marketing.

(3) Coverage: For most of the EAGLE countries, the national input became less and less representative. Often, even for the national input centres input criteria and workload excluded a significant part of their grey collections (dissertations, reports, conference proceedings).

(4) Economic model: The EAGLE model was based on flat membership fees and revenues from servers. Access to the database remained "traditional" with an annual subscription to the host or else a pay-per-view for each record with a credit card. With important members retiring from input and membership and the success of open access based initiatives, the economic model came to an end and needed revision.

The EAGLE members started a strategic debate on the future of the concept in 2001. The result is the present project: instead of a further development of the 20-year-old concept, the German and French EAGLE members propose a radical change that integrates the latest web-based technologies and the economic environment of open access to scientific and technical literature.

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