

Grey Literature: A Pilot Course constructed and implemented via Distance Education

Dominic J. Farace and **Jerry Frantzen**
GreyNet, Netherlands

Joachim Schöpfel and **Christiane Stock**
INIST-CNRS, France

Abstract

Over the past years, training courses, guest lectures, seminars and workshops have been organized by information professionals on the topic of grey literature. Most of these endeavours have undoubtedly had some impact on this field of information, however difficult it would be to measure. Many of these course lectures were given within existing programs and may have only been one-time offerings. At the Eighth International Conference on Grey Literature (New Orleans, 2006), two of the authors in this pilot study participated in a roundtable on curriculum development and grey literature. For their part, it was more important to find a proper structure within which to further construct an accredited course than to simply provide an inventory of *ad hoc* training courses or workshops, which deal/dealt with grey literature. The intended structure would have to incorporate the expertise of a number of stakeholders in order to guarantee potential students course credit, access to courseware and resources, qualified instruction, etc. Early on, it became evident that these stakeholders need not be physically present within one particular academic institution, but could rather be brought together in a joint venture by way of distance education. This paper will focus on the stakeholders in the pilot program and the specialization of each, as well as the students who are profiled and the knowledge and skills from which they would benefit. Built into the pilot is the maintenance of an ongoing log that would capture the pilot courses' development and progress, facilitate a SWOT analysis, enable comparison with other distance education courses in the LIS (Library and Information Studies) sector, and ultimately substantiate this course offering beyond a pilot phase to academic institutions with degree programs in information and other related fields on undergraduate and graduate levels.

Background

At the Fourth International Conference on Grey Literature (Washington D.C., 1999), Julia Gelfand presented a paper dealing with grey literature and distance education¹. At the Sixth International Conference on Grey Literature (New York, 2004), the results of an online survey in which 102 respondents participated not only indicated that an increasing number information professionals involved in grey literature were also involved in teaching and instruction but also they were in agreement with the statement (one of the 22 items on the questionnaire) that grey literature warrants a special field in information studies². At the Eighth International Conference on Grey Literature (New Orleans, 2006), during a Roundtable on Curriculum Development³ the content for a proposed course on grey literature and its subsequent headings was drafted. And now, this present study seeks to harness the results of the above mentioned conferences incorporating them in a proposal for a pilot course on grey literature that would be offered for full academic credit.

Premise and Goal

If Grey Literature constitutes a field in Library and Information Studies, then it must be offered to LIS students as an accredited college course. Given the state of the art in grey literature, Distance Education now offers a viable means of implementing an accredited course on Grey Literature

Method of Approach

In order to proceed further based on the premise and goal set forth in this paper, it was necessary to establish the status quo found in teaching grey literature to students, to confirm the authors' position that there was no course for credit entitled 'grey literature' or where 'grey literature' was the primary topic, and finally to construct and implement a pilot course on grey literature that would be offered at an accredited academic institution via distance education. The steps or phases in our approach were not in strict sequential order but were rather carried out by the team of authors/researchers simultaneously and monitored throughout the study. In order to establish what we refer to as the status quo, a survey was devised and carried out via an online, bilingual questionnaire. The eight item questionnaire in English and French was made available on GreyNet's website and was further distributed via channels belonging to INIST and GreyNet. The choice of these channels was based on the organizational affiliations of the authors. The duration of the online questionnaire was one month (September 10th through October 10th 2007) after which the responses were compiled and processed. The eight item questionnaire can be found as an *appendix* to this paper. The literature search carried out in this study was not intended to be exhaustive nor comprehensive. The authors were less interested in providing an inventory of courses that had been offered dealing with grey literature than confirming their premise that no course for credit