

## Some Types of Grey Literature: A Polish Context

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### Abstract

Grey literature consists of documents of very different types. There are some types typical of grey literature, such as scientific and technical reports, and also some types which evoke different opinions. This latter type, such as DŻS documents (documents pertaining to society), standards and patents, can be included in grey literature only because of the specific point of views held in these documents. There are also some specific types of grey literature mentioned particularly by Polish authors and collected by Polish libraries. There are a variety of different historical, economic and social reasons for this. The discussion of these documents' difference from other grey literature begins with a definition of grey literature. For an effective discussion of the different types of grey literature it is important to have an exact definition of the group of literature. A well-known definition was adopted outlining that grey literature consists of those publications "produced at all levels by government, academia, business and industry, both in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishing interests, and where publishing is not the primary business activity of the organization." Based on this definition, different types of documents can be identified, starting with prohibited (underground) literature, particularly that originating from the 1939-45 period of German occupation and the Communist period. Second, economic-focused materials useful for small business allowing them a quick technology transfer. Third, documents such as unpublished translations into Polish and fourth, articles published in small but locally important journals inaccessible outside of a specific area of the country such as a town or an even smaller locale. Every identified document type includes a description of the document's origin, its role for users, its level of 'greyiness,' and its organization and accessibility. Different information systems, both traditional as well computerized, concerned with the types of grey literature outlined above are explored in this paper.

The main goal of this paper is to describe different, and rarely mentioned, types of grey literature examining them from several points of view including the degree to which they fit the grey literature definition, the reasons for their production and use, and the reasons for their local importance. The paper will conclude by highlighting the differences in grey literature types revealed by my research, differences resulting from the varied local needs of non-official communication. Some of the types are stabile and do not tend to disappear. They are usually documents used for technical and economic development. Other documents, resulting from abnormal situations in which there is a lack of legal opportunities to publish social and political, as well as philosophical and historical literature, cease to be developed after the overall situation has changed.

### INTRODUCTION

The term 'grey literature' first appeared in scientific publications in the 1970s. Prior to this period, the term was equated solely with reports because it was technical, scientific and economic reports which dominated the materials referred to by label. At the same time, there were also other terms in use to describe the literature, such as 'informal,' 'non-conventional,' 'running away,' 'invisible' or 'half-published.' Attempts to define grey literature are not easy because of the low uniformity of the group of publications. Materials are distinguished mainly by their most important features which differentiate them from other groups. Among the most frequently enumerated features we can find the following common characteristics:

- They are difficult to identify;
- They are difficult to access;
- They are difficult to locate;
- They often come in the form of limited editions;
- They are often inaccessible in bookstores;
- They lack of bibliography registration;
- They are absent in library collections and catalogues;
- They are absent in a publisher's catalogues;
- They are difficult to acquire in libraries;
- They tend to be unpublished or published with delay;
- They are rapidly distributed.

In 1997 during the Third International Conference on grey literature, discussions on the most important and distinctive features of the literature were concluded and a generally agreed definition