

Grey Literature on a Level Playing Field

Outline of a presentation for the SWI-Working Group

African Studies Centre Leiden, Netherlands on 15 November 2016

Dominic Farace

Flip the switch, identify grey in a new light



It may not be alarming that the general public is unaware of what constitutes grey literature. What is alarming is when information professionals well into the 21st Century remain in the dark confusing grey literature with ephemera, echoing half-truths that it's hard to find, that it's unpublished, that it's not peer reviewed and of inferior quality to commercial publications. Even inserting personal bias *e.g.* that they don't like the term 'grey literature'. Let's take a few minutes to shed light on significant developments in this field of library and information science over the last couple of decades.

Grey Literature on the changing information landscape



One should not be surprised by changes in grey literature given the rapid pace of change on the information landscape brought on by advancements in technology and its impact on the production, processing, access, and preservation of grey as well as commercial publications. It could be said that the driving force behind these technological advancements were to a great degree focused on resolving the fundamental problems of information overload and its concomitant loss of information. Two problems seen as interconnected with the supply and demand sides of grey literature.

Examples of Grey Research Communities



Grey Literature is highly diverse bridging sectors of government, academics, business and industry. Even within one of these sectors diversity becomes further accentuated. Take for example academics, where research leading to published grey literature extends to disciplines and subject areas in the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. As a result, numerous grey literature communities have developed over the years in a concerted effort to facilitate both the supply and demand sides for their grey literature. Let's look at some examples of the work done by these communities with particular emphasis on the social sciences.

Welcome to challenges on the Grey Horizon



In the spring of 2014, a workshop held in Pisa, Italy addressed challenges to policy development of grey literature resources. A 15 point document that has come to be known as the Pisa Declaration was drawn-up and has since been signed by over 140 signatories from some 70 organizations in 30 countries worldwide. The Pisa Declaration has since been translated and published in 20 languages. GreyNet being one of the signatories to the Pisa Declaration carried out a study to assess and further leverage its own information resources. This presentation concludes with a brief review of the outcome of that study.

About the Presenter



Dominic Farace completed his doctoral dissertation in social sciences from the University of Utrecht. After six years heading the Department of Documentary Information at SWIDOC/KNAW, Farace founded GreyNet, Grey Literature Network Service in 1992. He is program director for the International Conference Series on Grey Literature (1993-2016), editor of The Grey Journal (TGJ), and provides workshops and training in the field of grey literature. Email: dominic.farace@textrelease.com