

GL systems and services in the specific fields of vocational training and labour policies in Italy: the ISFOL case

Isabella Pitoni and Diana Macrì
ISFOL

The recognition of the central role that issuing organisations have in the production, distribution and management of their grey literature is the theoretical context for this paper.

The paper focuses on a particular kind of GL system settled by an Italian public research institute primarily involved in vocational training and labour policies, in the framework of the EU strategies for the European Social Fund. Within this context, it aims to present the GL systems and services that ISFOL makes available through its Specialised Documentation Centre (SDC) in tight co-operation and collaboration with the European Union and the Italian Ministry of labour and social policies.

We focus on how ISFOL GL policy is changing, on one hand thanks to the development of communication and information technology and on the other hand following European Union policies for public access to documents and for the development of the e-Europe and the e-government.

Grey literature produced by ISFOL and the SDC, often in co-operation with the Italian Ministry of labour and social policies, is analysed. At the same time a description of the system of related websites where all ISFOL grey literature is made available online is carried out, to show how new technologies and policies influence the Institute's strategies for making GL available for researchers and operators.

In conclusion, suggestions and contributions are made to create a roadmap of an integrated GL system involving organisations operating in the field of vocational training and labour policies.

Introduction

The definition of grey literature known as Luxembourg Convention and formulated during the 3rd International conference on grey literature in 1997 can be a good way to start this paper. It says: "GL which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publisher"¹. Compared to the former "official definition" of grey literature given during the Seminar of York in 1978², although still stressing how GL's main characteristic is being outside the control of commercial publishers, it implies two important differences: on one hand the recognition that it is always within an organisation that grey literature is produced, and on the other hand the inclusion of electronic documents as possible form of GL.

The first aspect of the Luxembourg definition is not completely new. Although the importance of the issuing organisation has been a characteristic of GL since its appearance, today, thanks to the development of information and communication technologies, these are also involved in its control, management and distribution.

The importance of issuing organisations for GL production has been also at the centre of the latest discussions on grey literature in Italy. Of special interest was the presentation that

¹ Perspectives on the design and transfer of scientific and technical information. 3. International conference on grey literature, Luxembourg, 13-14 November 1997, Amsterdam : Transatlantic, 1997, p. III.

² "Il concetto di "letteratura grigia" equivale in linea di massima a quello di "letteratura non convenzionale". La caratteristica principale di questo tipo di letteratura, la cui pubblicazione in taluni casi non è prevista fin dall'inizio, è quella di non essere diffusa tramite i normali canali di pubblicazione commerciale, e quindi di essere difficilmente accessibile". La definizione concordata dagli esperti partecipanti al seminario di York è poi integrata di un elenco di esempi di "letteratura grigia" (In Alberani, Vilma, La letteratura grigia, Roma : La Nuova Italia scientifica, 1992, p. 28-29).