LARA - Open access to scientific and technical reports

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Abstract
INIST has a longstanding practise of collecting and referencing grey reports. Its collection of 60 000 government funded reports or institutional research papers is made available through traditional document supply.
Today reports are a minor issue in French repository projects. That's why INIST decided to create a national repository for grey reports: LARA - Libre Accès aux RApports scientifiques et techniques. Its aim is to allow direct and open access to the documents through the internet and to increase their visibility for the scientific community.
The project includes the identification of the report producers, negotiations and finally written agreements. It covers retrospective deposit of native electronic reports, the current production, but may also include the digitization of older print documents.
INIST will use the DSpace platform as basis for the repository. This choice implies the use of qualified Dublin Core metadata, harvesting facilities according to the OAI-MH protocol, and monitoring of formats (in the context of perennial access).
Besides contacts with the organizations, other points currently addressed in the project are technical issues like the customization of the platform and the creation of appropriate workflows. Legal aspects (contracts, licenses, etc.) concern not only the authors, but also their institutions and the end-user. French law and practice holds some particularities in this field.
LARA must be seen in the framework of the engagement of CNRS in the open access movement (CNRS signed the Berlin declaration in 2003). Together with OpenSIGLE, the free access project for the SIGLE database, it will be integrated in a new European project based on the use of meta-search-engines.

The French context:
As the national representative for the former SIGLE database, INIST-CNRS has a long-standing tradition in acquiring grey literature in general and reports in particular. Our current report collection holds more than 60 000 grey documents in paper copies. Some of the final reports belong to the dark grey category: they exist only in 2 or 3 copies. INIST receives a copy through agreements with the funding ministries or as ex-participants in our projects. Another form of dissemination used by organizations consists in the distribution of copies to a limited list of organizations has been more and more replaced by electronic versions accessible on the Internet of the producer. Reports are made available to users/customers through traditional document supply channels.

LIGRIA (for Administrative Grey Literature) is the name of a national experimentation in the nineties whose aim was to increase collecting of funded reports hidden in offices of the ministries and to make them available to the public. This experimentation ended in 1998. As an outcome of this action, la Documentation Française created a repository called Library of public reports or Bibliothèque des Rapports publics. It contains reports issued or funded by governmental bodies and dealing with administrative topics (Thiolon, 1997). In the beginning, only the records and abstracts were freely accessible and the download of the full text had to be paid for. Soon afterwards, all documents were proposed in full text and free of charge to the user. A similar offer for scientific and technical subjects was missing up to now.

Another project involving major research organizations in the nineties called Griseli (for Grey Literature) was more ambitious, but less successful. Reports were to be created in electronic form, then collected, indexed and disseminated by Griseli centres representing each a specific domain of research or technology. The standard SGML ISO 12083 was to be used for the bibliographic records and later on for the documents themselves (Comberousse, 1996). Only a small number of the centres went through with all aspects of the initial project, while others implemented parts of it.

Among traditional grey document types doctoral theses become more and more frequently published on the Internet, thanks to academic and governmental initiatives (e.g. Pastel, TEL, Cyther, Cyberthèses) (Paillassard, 2005). Other archives with grey literature may be discipline oriented like Mathdoc in mathematics. (MathDoc, 2005)