

## The accessibility to doctoral theses in Spain: A political change and a reconsidering of its nature

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### INTRODUCTION

The term Grey Literature was coined in the XIX century in USA, thanks to the literature reports [Ramos de Carvalho, 2001]. In 1978, after the attempt to define Grey Literature (from now GL) identifying it with the non conventional one, the attending ones to the York Seminary –not without reticence- were forced to make an index of the documents that could be integrated in it. However, nowadays we have to take into account that communication and information technologies, (CIT), have contributed to the inclusion of a new typology of Grey Documents, that emerge basically with the development of Internet [Ayuso García, 2000] and are enriching and transforming the already consolidated typology of Grey Documents [Ayuso García, M.D. y Martínez Navarro, V., 2004a: 50-51).

In this context, we find the Doctoral Theses and the original researching works about this topic related with the scientific, technical or artistic field from the doctorate programme that the PhD student make, which are composed to obtain the maximum university degree. They are inserted between the publications in the scientific and academic world, besides to the preprints, congress certificates, reviews, offprint, discussion forum, notebook works, translations, curricula, etc. [MacKenzie Owen, J.S.]. A Doctoral Thesis can also be considered as a post print. We are referring to the fact that it's a finished editorial product, positively evaluated and previously printed, with interest to the scientific community, but generally without a big commercial value<sup>1</sup>.

The selection of this GL typology for making the analysis for this paper justified itself because these documents, that have a big interest for the researching community, present big access difficulties. The reason for this difficulty is found in the fact that Doctoral Theses have not always been published and, when they appear printed in multiple copies, they do it often in restricted circulation and edition circuits, due to their specialised researching nature. That means that they are not distributed in the usual ways, and that they cannot be consulted easily, according to the grey documents conditions of the mentioned York meeting.

Without never arriving to be equal to the one of the reports, the attention that the scientific and documental community was giving to these academical works has always been high and its justified for it high scientific, informative –sometimes unique- methodological and bibliographical value. A consequence of this high interest is the repertories, which have been published by university, institutional or commercial initiatives in some countries very soon<sup>2</sup> and in others later in the XX century, like Spain.

This paper also shows the evolution that has taken place in the Spanish university policies regarding the conservation, diffusion and access to the defended theses in all the Spanish public or private universities and the multiple ongoing projects orientated to allow an easy access to this important scientific information resource. It also analyzes the positive aspects of the ongoing open access projects in our country that are similar to other experiences in other countries.

### 1. Considerations about the interest of GL in Spain.

Before we go deeper into the topic, it's convenient to revise the attention that GL has had in general in Spain. Seven years after the holding of York's Seminar, Alfredo Lara Guitard has written in the *Revista Española de Documentación Científica*: "un tema tan importante hoy día como el de la llamada 'Literatura gris' no ha sido aún objeto de la debida atención en las páginas de nuestra revista". Several years later, we can maintain this statement "continúa todavía vigente y no sólo en las páginas de la Revista mencionada, sino en el resto de las ya numerosas publicaciones que en

<sup>1</sup> We mention these points very often in our doctorate subject in the Universidad de Murcia, "Las nuevas formas de comunicación científica en la Sociedad del Conocimiento".

<sup>2</sup> In 1884 it appears in France the most important doctoral thesis catalogue that arrive to us in the data base *Teletèse: le Catalogue des thèses de doctorat soutenues devant les universités françaises*; the American doctoral thesis data bases keep information of the defended thesis in USA and Canada from 1881 (Cfr. *El Comprehensive Dissertation Index* del ISI de Philadelphia).