

Knowledge Generation in the Field of Grey Literature: A Review of Conference-based Research Results

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Abstract

Perhaps the most cost effective research carried out in information science today is in the field of grey literature. The published proceedings in the GL-Conference Series provide a record of impressive research results in this field of information. These results are based on various and diverse approaches and methodologies, whereby citation data, survey data, systems data, bibliographic and metadata, as well as other evidence based variables and indicators are compiled, processed, and analysed. Notwithstanding the fact that knowledge generation is an important measure of wealth in science and technology, the costs in human and material resources appropriated from research budgets must also weigh-in to determine real effectiveness. Only in this way can our initial rhetoric be transformed into a working hypothesis. This research project, which lies within the structure of the GL-Conference Series, seeks to analyse not only the benefits of research on grey literature but also the costs related to carrying-out and publishing research results. In order to gather evidence-based data, a Project Information Document (PID) Form similar to others that are in place and use elsewhere has been designed to accommodate GL research. The PID-Form will be distributed to those authors/researchers, who respond to the GL8 Call for Papers, as well as to authors/researchers from last year's conference in this series.

Results gathered from these research resumes are expected to provide answers to relevant questions such as the percentage of research on the topic of grey literature that is formally funded, the ratio of ad hoc research, the ratio of individual to team research, average research costs and expenses, the duration of research projects, etc. This evidence-based data will then enable us to grasp the cost effectiveness of research on grey literature and compare other types of data compiled within a conference structure. And, in so doing, our results will help to demonstrate the power of grey literature to other information professionals as well as policy and decision makers, funding bodies and new investors. Furthermore, our results may be seen as indicative for other S&T conferences based on a call-for-papers.

Introduction

Knowledge generation is a process. Most often it is tedious work over a long period of time. Research results are like various sized blocks, hewn as it were and assembled to form a base. This paper presents an overview of conference based research results, which our team considers relevant to a better understanding of the field of grey literature.

This research project can also be seen as a follow-up to previous research carried out by the team over the past four years in which other types of conference based data were compiled via diverse methods, namely: a Review of the literature in 2003ⁱ; a General Survey on Grey Literature in 2004ⁱⁱ; Citation Analyses in 2004ⁱⁱⁱ and 2005^{iv}; and, an Author Survey in 2005^v.

Research Method

Practically, the same pool of respondents i.e. the Authors in the GL Conference series participated in all of the above-mentioned research projects. And, the same team of researchers i.e. project workers from INIST and GreyNet constructed and carried out the projects.

With the Call-for-Papers in 2005, those submitting proposals were asked to provide within the abstracts cost-related information on their research project. However, no standardized format was provided. Nineteen of the 29 submissions contained such information. The GL authors were thus prepared to provide this type of information in the same degree that they were willing to respond to the Author Survey i.e. roughly 56%. This then led us to undertake the present study.

We decided to implement a standardized form in 2006 that would better capture project data. A web search revealed that the U.S. Department of Agriculture^{vi}, the World Bank^{vii} and IMF, as well as a number of CRIS, Current Research Information Systems, already have in place PID-Forms, which served as useful examples. We then drafted a PID-Form fitted to conference-based data. The form consists of 7 sections, totalling 20 response items, (*see Appendix*).

The PID forms were emailed to the first or sole author in each project both within the GL7 and GL8 Conference Programs. This totalled 52 projects of which 29 completed PIDs were returned and processed.