Enhancing Visibility:
# Integrating Grey Literature in the SOWIPORT Information Cycle

Maximilian Stempfhuber, Philipp Schaer, and Wei Shen
GESIS-IZ Social Science Information Centre (Germany)

Abstract
Despite the fact that Grey Literature plays a key role in disseminating research results to the scientific community, it currently is not represented equally well in the established information landscape. While institutional information infrastructures supporting scholarly research (e.g. libraries or information centres) mostly focus on publications from traditional publishers or on what is published within their own institution, a parallel universe of services and servers for Grey Literature and Open Access publications has been established, which makes it hard for any user to only get an overview of what is available in his area of interest. Following a discipline-oriented approach, the newly established scientific information portal SOWIPORT not only integrates Grey Literature and Open Access publications from the social sciences with traditional ones, but also establishes support for the whole research lifecycle, where research, publication and discourse are interconnected and make use of the direct and electronic availability of these types of publications.

Introduction

With the advent of the World Wide Web and lowered technical and financial barriers that come with it, scholarly publishing in the last decade more and more shifted from print media to forms of electronic distribution. While this new technology allowed delivering a larger number of publications more timely and directly to the readers, it also put up a new challenge for those involved in collecting, documenting, managing and distributing information, namely libraries, information centres and information brokers. Not only were researchers and research institutes now able to electronically publish research outcomes or learning materials on the Web – by doing so they often circumvented the established workflow of documentation, archiving and distribution normally handled by libraries or information centres (figure 1).
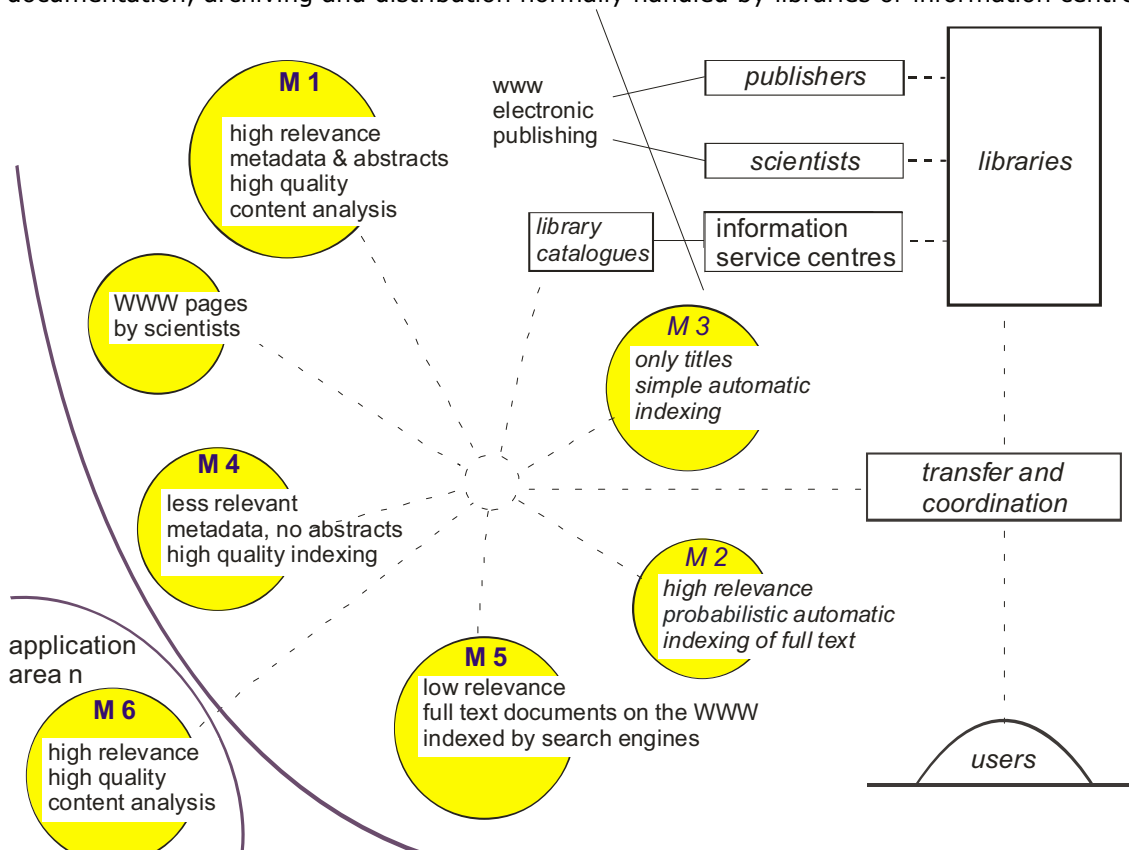
Figure 1: The changing information landscape in scholarly publishing (cf. Krause 2006, modified)

The role of libraries as agents, buying or collecting publications from commercial publishers or researchers of their own institution (e.g. technical reports) and making them available within the own institution (e.g. universities or research organizations) and to the outside world still is in effect, but there are much more sources of publications out on the Web now and many of them are not accessible through the established