Grey Literature in Slovenia – Traditional is solved, what's next?

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Abstract:

This paper presents the research done on the special libraries of institutions that are the biggest producers of grey literature in Slovenia. They were defined as the one that do not belong to the formal information and publishing industry (organisations (or individuals working for them) in industry, research institutes, museums and governmental agencies.

The results of the research show how the long-term use and collaboration to the National Union bibliographic system prepared librarians and other information specialists for grey literature handling and dissemination. GL labeled as sensitive material was also found as the important part of some special libraries collections.

Introduction

One of the most widespread used definitions of the grey literature (GL) is the one from the 4th International Conference on Grey Literature (GL4) held in Luxembourg. It says that GL is:
Information produced at all levels of government, academic, business and industry in electronic and print formats not controlled by commercial publishing i.e. where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body.
(http://www.textrelease.com/textreleasehome/pressreleases.html)

Grey literature is produced mostly by government agencies, professional organizations, research institutions, universities and other public institutions whose goal is to disseminate current information to a wide audience. The producers of GL are defined as the ones that do not belong to the formal publishing and more generally, information industry. They are mostly organisations (or individuals working for them) in universities and research institutes, and governmental organizations, but also others. GL is often synonymous with unpublished research, although it is not always the case. It is probably easier to describe grey literature through the characteristics of the material, than to define its' content.

So GL is commonly defined as any documents that are not commercially published and is typically composed of research or technical reports, working papers, internal documents, conference (unpublished) proceedings and of course different university dissertations. The greatest challenges involved with these items are the process of identification, since there is limited indexing, and acquisition, since availability is usually marred with uncertainty. Added to this is the absence of editorial control, raising questions about authenticity and reliability.

Traditional grey (or gray) literature is concerned with physical objects, publications produced and distributed by the individuals or organisations that create them. They were not published commercially and usually not indexed by major database vendors. Librarians and other information specialists have invested lot of time and expertise to make these publications available to their clients and other users. If we follow the definition by which the key difference between other sorts of publishing and grey literature is that the latter is not produced as a commercial undertaking, but produced as part of a different communications process, there are more challenges. While the search for these eclectic materials is not new, the development of the Web has increased existing opportunities and open new ones. Trends in communication are changing the notion of grey literature to include also home pages, e-mails, blog postings, wikis etc. The notion of quality has become even more important as grey literature is usually not a subject to the peer review, and must be understood and used accordingly.

World Wide Web sites aid to understanding pf the nature of grey literature by its' various search tools. The focus is upon freely available resources that offer some full-text coverage. While the majority concentrate upon scientific and technical literature, other resources must not be forgotten, as they illustrate the wide range and variation of grey literature.

A comprehensive solution (at least for science and research) would be to integrate access to grey literature within the databases that scholars regularly consult. These databases traditionally identify