

# “Grey Literature” in Electronic Archives

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**Abstract:** The term „grey literature“ is used for documents disseminated through non-traditional channels. As a general rule, these documents are accessible outside the book publishing and distribution system. In recent years, this kind of literature is in high demand, in so far that the "grey documents" often contain most up-to-date information. They are stored in institutional electronic archives – repositories. In the report is introduced the most popular electronic archive - Open Grey and the repositories of the Balkan countries, incl. Bulgaria.

**Keywords:** grey literature, electronic archive, repository, Open Access

## 1 What is “Grey Literature”?

The term “grey literature” is used by scholars, researchers, library and information specialists for documents disseminated through non-traditional channels, which are also and not under bibliographic control. As a rule, these documents are accessible outside the book publishing and distribution system and cannot be purchased in bookstores or from publishers. Examples of grey literature are technical and scientific reports, reports of research projects, patents, official governing documents, master’s theses and dissertations. Most often, the term is used for scientific studies, as sometimes the grey literature is the only source of information on specific research problems. Mainly the scientific community uses such literature, because it usually contains the most recent information (Debachere, 1995).

Earlier, the term was used for materials with limited circulation and even for classified documents in such areas as national security, rocket building, and the space industry.

A new contemporary meaning of the term “grey literature” was offered at the Third International Conference on Grey Literature, held in November 1997, in Luxemburg. An amendment to it was adopted at the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference in Prague in 2010. It stated that “...the grey literature includes government, scientific, official, and industry documents that are not processed bibliographically and are not accessible through

the traditional channels of book trade either in print or electronic format, if their quality allows collecting them in library holdings and institutional archives (repositories)” (Schöpfel, & Farace, 2010).

In the last few years, the development of information technologies and contemporary methods of archiving and distribution of information have offered new possibilities for access and use of grey literature, as a rapid way to meet the needs of the scientific community (Farace, & Schoepfel, 2010).

## **2 From the Bibliographic System SIGLE towards the Electronic Archive OpenGrey**

The first bibliographic system for grey literature, SIGLE (System for Information on Grey Literature in Europe), was created as an initiative of the European Communities in 1980. It had the goal of collecting and disseminating information on grey literature in the European countries. A universal format for the description of grey documents and a system for managing the databases were then established. The system developed quickly and attracted the participation of the other European countries. In 1985, the European Association for Grey Literature (EAGLE) was created, with headquarters in the Hague. One of its purposes was to organize and hold annual international conferences on grey literature. The latest (18<sup>th</sup>) International Conference on Grey Literature, “Grey Literature-18”, took place on 28-29 November 2016, in the Medical Academy, New York. It was devoted to the diversity in the publication and dissemination of the grey literature.

Each participating country is represented in EAGLE by its national center, which collects, processes, preserves, archives and disseminates grey literature. Gradually, the number of grey documents quickly increased. In October 1993, the database SIGLE contained 336, 650 records; in September 2005, its volume increased two-fold – to 630, 000 records, and 60, 000 new records were added every year. In February 2005, the records in the database reached 860, 000 and were deposited by 16 European countries and the European Commission (Pavlovska, 2013). Great Britain had the largest contribution (almost 49% of all records), Germany (24%), and France (about 10%).

In 2007, the bibliographic system SIGLE was reorganized into an electronic archive, OpenSIGLE, which provides free access to grey documents. Most of the documents are reports containing a wide variety of different documents; office, annual, and technical reports, as well as reports from ministries, labs, and research groups. Each participating country adds to the OpenSIGLE archive through its national centers for documentations and national libraries. In 2009-2010, the International Internet network of grey literature, GreyNet (Grey Literature Network Service) (E-Archiv Grey Literature, n.d.) joined OpenSIGLE, adding pre-prints of conference proceedings on grey literature to its electronic archive. GreyNet was created in 1992 for the purpose of facilitating dialog, research, and communication between individuals and organizations involved in the area of grey literature. Its responsibilities include spreading results of scientific studies and materials from international conferences on grey literature, creation and

maintenance of internet resources, and development of educational programs in the area of grey literature.

The international network GreyNet works within the framework of the project TextRelease ([www.textrelease.com](http://www.textrelease.com)), which maintains regular contacts with ICSTI (International Council for Scientific and Technical Information), EBSCO, Elsevier, Springer and other information services. TextRelease is sponsored by the National British Library, EBSCO Publishing, the US Library of Congress, the Center for Scientific and Technical Information in France, the National Technical Library of the Czech Republic, the US National Library of Medicine (NLM), and other institutions.

GreyNet publishes an international journal for gray literature, *The Grey Journal*, which is targeting library schools, librarians, researchers, information specialists, editors, and archivists. *The Grey Journal* is published three times a year (in both print and electronic format) and is indexed by Scopus. Its electronic version is available through EBSCO Publishing.

In 2011, the electronic archive OpenSIGLE changed its name to OpenGrey. It is indexed by Google and Google Scholar and currently is one of the most popular interdisciplinary repositories for grey literature in the areas of technologies, social studies and humanities, medicine, and economics (Stok, n.d.). OpenGrey is included in the most widely used catalog of electronic archives, the Directory of Open Access Repositories (OpenDOAR) which includes about 900,000 links to grey literature.

### **3 Repositories for "Grey Literature"**

According to the DOAR registry, the greatest number of repositories were created using the program DSpace. Every year, 300 new repositories, which use this product, are registered. The United States ranks at the top—by the end of 2014, 256 institutions in the country have created their own repositories using DSpace; in India—133; in Japan—102; in Brazil—84; in Spain—83, in Great Britain—68, etc. (Directory of Academic open access Repositories, n.d.).

To date, on the Balkans, Turkey has the largest number of repositories (76), from which 57 are university repositories, containing dissertations and presentations at scientific conferences, educational materials, historical archives and other grey documents. Some Turkish universities have several repositories—for example, the Istanbul Arel University (<http://earchiv.arel.edu.tr:8080/jspui/>). Croatia occupies second place among the Balkan countries with respect to the number of electronic archives. From its 55 archives 42 are academic; eight belong to non-trade organizations; and five – to research centers. Greece ranks third – 36 repositories (Directory of Academic open access Repositories, n.d.). The electronic archives contain collections of reports from conferences, textbooks and educational materials, technical reports and presentations.

Bulgaria ranks fourth for institutional repositories—there are eight repositories in the country, six of which belong to universities (Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, New Bulgarian University, Burgas Free University, Sofia Medical University, “D. A. Tsenov” Academy of Economics, and “Angel Kunchev” University of Ruse) and

one belonging to the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

In Macedonia, there are three repositories, in Bosnia and Herzegovina – two, in Albania – one. All repositories were created in universities and contain a large number of grey documents that are accessible for undergraduate and graduate students and faculty.

#### 4 Conclusion

In the last few years, grey literature has become one of the most searched objects for digitalization. Now no one doubts its importance in the overall process of scientific communication. A search in Google retrieves more than 1, 300, 000 items. The unpublished, grey documents, are gradually turning into an information foundation of the virtual world in the same way, as the print word has been, until now, the main vehicle for scientific communication in the real world. That is why the universities and the academic libraries should direct their efforts towards the creation of institutional repositories, allowing the preservation of and free access to the results of scientific studies performed at the institution, to its theses and dissertations, as well as to other kinds of grey literature.

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