

Acquisition and Management of Grey Literature: A Case Study of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria

Jonathan Olusola Fatokun
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
Nigeria
Jofatokun2@gmail.com

Oyintola Isiaka Amusa
Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
Nigeria
amusaoi@funaab.edu.ng

ABSTRACT: Grey literature and resources are crucial to research and knowledge development due to their unique information value. Many grey information resources are generated daily by academics, researchers, and administrators in universities and other academic institutions. The majority of these resources are yet to be acquired and organized for use due to some issues associated with them such as no strict bibliographic control, nonprofessional lay-out or formats, and low print runs. This paper shares the experience of the Nimbe Adedipe Library of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Nigeria regarding the acquisition and management of grey literature generated within the university. Specifically, it focused on the nature and academic benefits of grey literature, grey literature generated in FUNAAB, acquisition and management of grey literature by the library. It is concluded that considering their research and historical values, grey literature should be acquired and managed by academic libraries.

I. Introduction

Libraries and information centers acquire a wide range of information resources to satisfy the information needs of their clientele. These resources are both in print and non-print format. They are organized to meet users' needs at all levels of education and professional practices. However, acquisition and management of grey literature are not given prominence in academic libraries in Nigeria. Acquisition, integration, and management of grey literature are often neglected in most Nigerian academic libraries, despite their inherent benefits to research and knowledge development.

The Fourth International Conference on Grey Literature (1999) defined grey literature as "That which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers".

Grey literature is being generated daily by individuals, groups, and organizations, especially academic institutions. The identification and acquisition of grey literature pose challenges to librarians and other information professionals. Among these challenges is the absence of strict bibliographic control, that is, the basic information such as author, publication date, and publisher may be absent or cannot be easily discerned. Other challenges include the non-professional layout and formats and low print runs of grey literature that make their management problematic as compared to books and journals.

Considering the challenges associated with grey literature, such as definition, scope, benefit, and difficulties in managing them; this paper focused on the experience of managing grey literature at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Nigeria.

II. Literature Review

Osayande and Ukpebor (2012) viewed grey literature as “publications not published commercially or indeed by major database vendors”.

Okoroma (2012) referred to grey literature as “unpopular but precious semi published information materials with very limited circulation which are not usually accessible through the normal commercial book channels such as publishers catalogue and book shops.”

Makespace (1985) described grey literature as “a subset of ephemeral information sources. Ephemeral sources are materials that contain verbal or illustrative processes but not in the standard book, pamphlet or periodical format”.

Juricek (2009) noted the advantage of grey literature as speed flexibility, and detailers.

Aina (2004) regarded grey literature as “reference sources because they provide information background and current information”.

III. Objectives of the Study

This study sets out to achieve the following objectives:

1. Highlight the nature and academic benefits of grey literature
2. Advocate for an acquisition policy for grey literature in university libraries
3. Identification of Grey Literature Sources in FUNAAB
4. Acquisition of Grey literature in FUNAAB
5. Management of Grey Literature in FUNAAB

IV. Findings and Discussion

1. Nature and Academic Benefits of Grey Literature

Grey literature is generated by researchers and scholars in the fields of education, science, medicine, law, and technology as well as institution managers in the course of daily

administrative routines. While they are not considered scholarly per se, they are very important in research because they contain data and statistics.

Characteristically, grey literatures are not commercial publications. Hence, they are relatively difficult to acquire, lack standard bibliographic control, with flexible editorial processing, ephemeral in nature, and not usually included in the published indexes and abstracts.

Owen (1997) commented on the characteristics of grey literature and opined that

Grey literature has become a specialized branch of the information profession due to a number of characteristics that differentiate it from published literature. Grey literatures are unconventionally published and non-commercial materials that cannot be found with the normal channel associated with commercially published materials.

Furthermore, Rajendiran (2006) observed that “the availability of grey literature largely depends on the policy of the generating institution; they may not be peer reviewed, and may not be official sources of information”. In addition, grey literature has poor availability, poor bibliographic information and control, non-professional layout and format, and a short life-span as regards relevancy. These factors, he concluded, make it difficult for libraries to identify and acquire them.

However, they are regarded as significant for research and scholarly development in many disciplines.

Soule and Ryan (1999) reaffirmed some importance of grey literature as:

Provision of information that is often unavailable in published open source; availability on more timely basis than conventional literature; corroboration of important assertions found in other sources, which is always paramount in intelligence analysis; conciseness, focus and detail-ness of contents; free availability, content relevance and uniqueness; common medium of information exchange.

Osayande and Ukpebor (2012) viewed grey literature as “the main sources of indigenous information” and believed that it is crucial to researchers, lecturers, and students in universities and other tertiary institutions. Examples of grey literature provided in their studies include theses, projects, and conference papers.

2. Acquisition of Grey Literature in Academic Libraries

Consequent upon the geometrical increase in information generation in other media besides print, there has been a paradigm shift in the nomenclature of library. A library is now referred to as an information resources center.

Academic libraries acquire and organize information resources being generated in their institutions, most of which are grey literature, in order to foster knowledge and to expand the frontier of knowledge in all disciplines.

Acquisition of grey literature generated within the university poses a lot of challenges due to the non-conventional nature of grey resources as well as the absence of clear-cut acquisition procedures. Ifidon (1998) advised that “there is need for a librarian that wants to build and maintain collection of grey resources to keep his or her eyes and ears open in order to know when they are available and then promptly acquire them”.

Further, considering the fact that it is not mandatory that copies of grey literature be deposited in libraries, it is necessary for the librarian in charge of collection development to make personal efforts to acquire them. He or she could visit the sources or producers of grey literature to obtain copies. However, the best and more effective way of building and maintaining a grey literature collection is through a legal deposit enactment. The university library could be accorded with a legal deposit status for grey literature and other resources published in the university.

Another veritable means of developing the grey literature collection is by establishing a resources exchange arrangement with other institutions that produce them. Resources exchange among institutions can be useful. More significantly, it promotes goodwill and development among institutions involved. Gifts, exchange, and legal deposit arrangements can be synchronized into an acquisition policy on grey literature management in a library.

Evans (1995) described an acquisition or collection development policy as “the written statement of that plan, providing details to guide the library staff”. Thus, a policy statement is a document that represents a plan of action and information used to guide the staff’s thinking and decision making.

The acquisition policy is a document that contains rules and direction regarding the acquisition and management of information resources regarded as grey literature. The document could contain a list of resources regarded as grey literature (to facilitate identification), creators or authors of the resources (to facilitate liaison and interaction), number of copies to be acquired per title, treatment of grey literature on acquisition, and statements on what types of grey literature to accept as gift or repository materials. The policy should also include procedure for periodic evaluation of the acquisition processes. The main reason for this policy is to ensure that a library meet the information demands of its users economically, timely, and effectively through the acquisition and management of grey literature and other information resources.

3. Identification of Grey Literature Sources in FUNAAB

There are three sources of grey literature produced in FUNAAB. These are:

- 1) Periodical publications produced by the Directorate of Public Relations of the University. These are being produced in successive units similar to serials publications and monographic series. They are regular publications, issued at interval, and with identified and accessible source. Examples of this type of publications include:

- *FUNAAB News* – A weekly publication of news and event in the University
 - *FUNAAB News Flash* – A publication devoted to communicating breaking news in the University
 - *FUNAAB Inaugural Lecture Series*
 - *Convocation Ceremony's Order of Proceedings and List of Granddaunts*
 - *Annual Convocation Lectures Series*
 - *Annual Convocation Speeches*
 - *University Handbook*
 - *NAL News Bulletin* – a monthly publication of the University
- 2) Intellectual write-ups produced by individuals (e.g., faculty members, administrative staff or students), academic departments, administrative departments, professional associations, and learned societies within the university. Examples of these resources include: research reports, theses and dissertation, student project reports, administrative reports, seminar and workshop papers, conference proceedings, and special lecture papers (e.g., guest lectures).
- 3) Information resources produced by collegiate units of the University. Examples of these resources include: college and departmental handbook, news bulletin, past examination paper (question papers), Vice-Chancellor's addresses, keynote addresses, photographs, personnel records, and other official records.

Those resources listed above are of high research value and can be found only within the university. However, not much attention has been given to the proper management of these resources in the University, especially in Nimbe Adedipe Library. This is due to the following reasons:

- Many of such resources are difficult to acquire, organize, and arrange for use in the library. The university library is not notified of their publication.
- The library request for copies of such materials from their publishers is rarely granted.
- Absence of directive or bye-law mandating the deposit of certain copies of these resources with the library.

4. *Acquisition of Grey literature in FUNAAB*

Upon realizing the indispensability of grey literature generated in the University to research and self-development, the Library resolved to harness and exploit the potentials of such resources. The Library now monitors the development of grey literature for the benefit of faculty, students, and researchers, within and outside the University. In order to achieve this, the Library has employed the following means to search for and acquire grey literature:

- **Personal contacts.** This involves reaching out to and maintaining personal contact with the Directorate of Public Relations, colleges, departments, and other individuals that produce grey literature in the University. Personal contact facilitates identification and

location of the sources of grey literature within the University. Through this means, the Library is able to obtain copies of grey literature produced in the University.

- **Voluntary Deposits.** The Library does not enjoy legal deposit right as the University has no such bylaws. However, some producers of grey literature such as departments, colleges, graduate school, Directorate of Public Relations, and the University Ceremonial Committee have been depositing copies of their publications to the Library. Examples of such resources include: inaugural lectures, *FUNAAB News*, *FUNAAB News Flash*, student projects, theses and dissertations, etc.
- **Attendance of workshops, conferences, and special academic activities on the campus.** Librarians attend every one of these activities that take place on campus in order to collect copies of lectures, conference proceedings, papers, etc., issued at such events. This approach is really rewarding due to the quality of grey literature acquired this way.
- **Purchase:** Although grey literature is not readily available for sale, the Library still strives to buy those from professional associations on campus. These are scholarly publications of national associations such as Nigeria Library Association, Nigerian Science Association, Nigerian Institute of Animal Scientists, and Nigerian Society of Engineers.
- **Gifts.** Grey literature created by other academic institutions, corporate bodies, and individuals outside the University are being received as gifts. Examples of such resources include: academic calendars of universities, annual reports, personal papers, statistical reports (e.g., Central Bank of Nigeria, National Universities Commission, etc.). These resources when received are integrated with those generated in the University.

5. Management of Grey Literature in FUNAAB

Grey literature acquired via the above means is sorted according to its provenance and arranged accordingly.

Specifically, undergraduate projects are organized at the Reserved Book Section for further processing and integration into the collection. These resources are products of intellectual activities by every academic department. When they are catalogued, classified, and shelved, the lists containing such resources are made available to users.

Furthermore, Master's theses and Ph.D. dissertations are housed in another section of the Library called "Nimbe Adedipe Research Collection". This section is for academic staff, researchers, and postgraduate students to use only. Also housed at the Nimbe Adedipe Research Collection are all categories of grey literature generated in the University.

Grey literature of periodical nature is organized and shelved in another special collection unit, called "Osunkeye Food and Nutrition Library", within the University Library. These resources have a high frequency of publication. They are the most regular and visible grey literature generated in the University. They are accessioned, classified, and shelved according to their

sources and focus, such as “inaugural lecture series”, “FUNAAB News”, “convocation lectures”, “guest lecturer series”, “conference proceedings”, and “reports”. They are accommodated in the Osunkeye Food and Nutrition Library, pending the establishment of grey literature unit in the Library when the second phase of the library complex is completed. That unit, when eventually established, will serve as the main center for grey literature acquisition, management, and use.

The Library has taken the ephemeral and non-standard nature of grey literature into consideration in its management. For instance, *FUNAAB News Flash* is page publication. Those in loose-leaf and single sheet are kept in files and numbered serially to ensure access. Those that are pamphlet like are sorted and kept in pamphlet boxes and kept on the shelves. The files and cartons are labelled according to their contents to facilitate access.

Access to grey literature housed in the library is free but restricted. The resources are available to the registered users of the Library. To access and use a particular issue of the resources, the user after identifying the desired ones through the library records places a request for them with the library personnel, who will retrieve the document for the user. This measure ensures that the resources in the library are not disorganized or stolen from the Library due to their flimsy nature. In order to ensure regular use of such resources, the Library has undertaken the following activities:

- provide reading rooms (air conditioned) and carrel for users
- use the inverter to supply electricity to the reading rooms in case of power failure
- market such resources available in the *Library News Bulletin*
- email lists of available resources to the University staff, especially lecturers
- assist users in identification and retrieval of desired resources
- provide the reprographic services so that users can make photocopies of desired documents

V. Conclusion

Grey literature has become an important source of information. These resources are generated daily in business enterprises, organisations, and tertiary institutions of learning. They are useful materials for research and thus valuable to members of these organisations and institutions as well as outsiders. Academic libraries acquire grey literature produced in their institutions and organize and make them available for use.

In order to promote the use of grey literature, the Nimbe Adedipe Library of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta (FUNAAB), Nigeria has identified three sources of grey literature produced in the University, established strategies to acquire such resources, and laid out plans to manage and provide access to its grey literature collection.

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Authors:

Jonathan Olusola Fatokun, Nimbe Adedipe Library, Federal University of Agriculture, P.M.B 2240, Abeokuta, Nigeria. Email: Jofatokun2@gmail.com

Oyintola Isiaka Amusa, Nimbe Adedipe Library, Federal University of Agriculture, P.M.B 2240, Abeokuta, Nigeria. Email: amusaoui@funaab.edu.ng

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