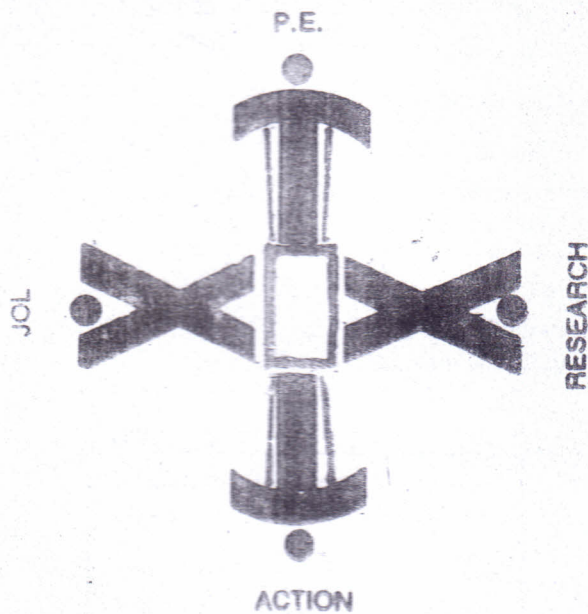


# JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

(JOPER)





## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

*JOPEER*, in this Edition deliberated on the issues of Health related Physical Fitness status of female undergraduate students, Physical Fitness and Prevention of Chronic diseases; Physical fitness for Women, Healthy Living for Pregnant and Nursing Mothers, Islamic Views on Family Planning; Factors that determine participation in Sports by College Staff, Marketing, Strategic for Producing Champion athletes, and the use of Grey Literature in the University libraries.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Dominic O. L.: Correlation of Health Related Physical Fitness Variables of University of Ilorin Undergraduate Female Students -----</i>	<i>1053</i>
<i>Olaitan O.L.: The Role of Physical Fitness in the Prevention of Chronic Diseases -----</i>	<i>1060</i>
<i>Alabi F.A: Physical Fitness for Women -----</i>	<i>1065</i>
<i>Peter-Ajayi O.M.: Healthy Living For Pregnant and Nursing Mothers: An Anti-dote to Child Mortality and Deformity -----</i>	<i>1069</i>
<i>Sulaiman K.O.: Islam And Family Planning -----</i>	<i>1075</i>
<i>Abayomi B.O. &amp; Ogunsanya J.O.: Socio-Environmental Indices As Determinants of Oyo State College of Education Academic Staff Towards Participation in Sports and Exercise. -----</i>	<i>1082</i>
<i>Adiat F.: Sports Marketing Strategy for Producing Champion Athletes. -----</i>	<i>1088</i>
<i>Adegboye O.A. &amp; Ogunrewa J.O.: Acquisition, Management And Prospects of Grey Literature in University Libraries in Developing Countries -----</i>	<i>1098</i>



# ACQUISITION, MANAGEMENT, USE AND PROSPECTS OF GREY LITERATURE IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

BY

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper gave an exposition on the definition of grey literature as those categories of literature which are issued mainly for information purposes and are not commonly controlled by commercial publishing interest. It also attempted an extensive description of what constitute grey literature with a view to bringing out their various characteristics. The work further gave a general over-view of the role of grey literature. Among other factors, they serve as good complements of published literature even though their significance have not been brought to the lime light as other published resources in university libraries. The sources of grey literature were identified as those that were unpublished and were not acquired through normal book trade channels. Methods of acquisitions by practice in university libraries were mainly through direct purchase from the creating agencies as well as through gifts and exchanges programmes among the creators and the university libraries. Also, the management of grey literature vary from library to library and there was not yet evolved a standardized method of maintenance especially in the areas of cataloguing and classification. There was evidence that grey literature were being put into use but quite a lot of current awareness was still needed for optimum maximization of use of these resources. Problems facing the prospects of grey literature were also highlighted and recommendations were also made towards boosting the prospects of grey literature.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Libraries in general and university libraries inclusive are charged with the responsibility of acquiring, managing and disseminating of information to their users. This basic mission of the libraries is executed through the provision of the myriads of information in different media and formats. These arrays of media and formats range from books, journals,

audio-visual and most recently via the Information and Telecommunication Technology (ICT). All these are required in the furtherance of research, teaching and service to which the university system is committed. The role of the university library as the nerve-centre of university education can not be over-emphasized. It is the major organ that carries out the selection, acquisition, processing and organization of materials



for effective dissemination and easy retrieval (Oni-Orisan, 1992).

However, one of the invaluable resources stocked by university libraries is what has been termed as "Grey Literature". What then is Grey literature? What role do they play and how are they managed and utilized? What are the prospects of this group of resources in university libraries? These are the concerns of this paper.

### Meaning and Concepts of Grey Literature

Grey literature can be referred to as publications that are not controlled by commercial publishing interests, and where publishing is not the primary business activity of the organization (Weintraub, 2000). Mckimmie and Szurmak (2002) further defined it as materials not identifiable through a traditional index or database.

Generally, the consensus as revealed by literature is that what really constitute grey literature are works that are not published. This notion has been supported by Debachere (1995) in his own description of grey literature that they are resources that cover an extensive range of materials that cannot be found easily through conventional channels like the publishers".

On the questions of what constitute grey literatures, Hirtle (1991) submitted:

"the quasi-printed reports, unpublished but circulated papers, unpublished proceedings of conferences, printed programs from conferences and other non-unique materials which seems to constitute

the bulk of our modern manuscript collections".

Mckimmie and Szurmak (2002) also opined that grey literature include clippings, reports, newsletters, personal files, list serve queries, consultations and personal contacts and periodicals not cited in data bases. Furthermore, Thompson (2001) defined grey literature as it affects the engineering field as:

"technical reports produced by various agencies, governmental or not . . . standards, military specifications, meeting paper, reprints or electronic prints (e-prints) manufacturers catalogs, theses and dissertations."

Quinion, (1996-2004) submitted that grey literature are materials that are issued by government academia, business and industry in both print & electronic formats, personal contacts and dissertations inclusive. It should be noted that one major characteristic of the grey literature apart from its diversified formats is that they are mainly unpublished and are not available through the traditional channel of publishers and booksellers (Owen 2004). This view is further corroborated by Farace (1998) who submitted that grey literature differs from commercial publications because it is not based on economic model but rather on a communication model." This view is also sustained by Quinion (1996-2004). This view is contrary to the public and economic gains that characterize publishing. To this Okwilagwe (2001) posited that publishing activities consist of planning, selecting, editing,



designing, producing, marketing (promotion and sales) and distribution of printed materials such as books, magazines, newspapers and many others, including electronic products. It could be summarized that grey literature are not generated by publishing houses. They are either the results of research activities of individuals, or organizations. In addition, according to Owen (2004) grey literature is a term used to describe information products which are slated and distributed in order to disseminate knowledge (ideas, facts, opinion) rather than to sell for a profit.

### **Role of Grey Literature**

Published literature alone cannot satisfy all informational and research needs. It is in this regard that one could appreciate the invaluable resources inherent in grey literature as they serve as good complements of published resources. It is worth reiterating again that grey literature contain vital information that are not necessarily found in published literature hence their being referred to as 'grey'; the 'grey', suggesting their amorphous characteristics. However, they have been adjudged as very rich resources materials for research. The scientific and technical Network (STNews 1999) for instance mentioned that grey literature do contain concrete, up-to-date information on research findings that are not necessarily founding conventional literature.

Mason (2004) reported that grey literature as "the unsung hero, the foot soldier, the foundation of the building". This comment goes a long way in ascertaining the important contribution of grey literature to research and learning.

One other important revelation about grey literature is about its ease of access. The rate of proliferation and availability are very high rendering it a rich source for the formation of science policy and public attitude. This ease of access is particularly promoted by electronic access (Weintraub, 2000). He further asserted that grey literature provides citizens with the information they require in personal decision making and what remained an information source is consulted most often. Also, the resource has been described as a very viable tool of public enlightenment. Finally, grey literature has evolved as a specialized branch of information profession due to these special characteristics (Owen 2004).

### **Acquisition of Grey Literature**

Generally, observation has revealed that the acquisition of grey literature is not an easy task; the chief problem being the fact that they are not readily available through book trade channel. As a result, they are not usually available on book stands and bookshops.

However, the first issue of consideration in the acquisition of grey literature is the identification of the source of the materials. Augur (1989) identified some notable sources of grey literature viz:

Associations, churches, country councils, educational establishments, federations, institutes, institutions, laboratories, libraries, museums, private publishers research establishments, societies, trade unions, trusts and universities.



In practice, Nigeria for example, most grey literature available in university libraries are sourced from government agencies and parastatals, non-governmental agencies and international bodies such as World Health Organizations (WHO), Organization of African Unity (OAU) (now known as African Union), United Nations Development project (UNDP) and so on.

Other sources of grey literature in African university libraries are from sister universities all over the world. Publications emanating from such universities include university calendar and brochures, faculty handbooks and newsletters from various units of the universities. By and large, students' theses, dissertations and projects which are generated by the various universities also form part of the grey literature in individual university libraries.

As regards methods of acquisition, only few of the materials are acquired through direct purchase. In Nigeria, for example, acquisitions tours are made to some government establishments to make direct purchase of materials which were hitherto distributed free of charge. However, money-charges were introduced with time because of inadequate funds available to the creating agencies. Nevertheless, most of these listed grey literature are still available free of charge but concerted efforts need be made to acquire them as the creating agencies have stopped bearing the postal costs. Foreign agencies still send out free publications to university libraries on their subscription lists. Also, African universities engage in exchange programmes among themselves in the acquisition of grey literature. This is in conformity with established practice

worldwide as revealed by literature (Augur, 1989).

The acquisition of grey literature is not without its bottle-necks. Alemna (2001) for example, identified acquisitions as part of the problems of grey literature. Specifically, one major problem identified by literature is lack of bibliographic information and control. This is evidenced by the non-use of ISBN or ISSN by most grey literature (Augur, 1989-3). This problem makes it difficult to trace the materials. Debachere (1995) reflected on the problems encountered by users when searching for such materials in libraries.

Another problem had been associated with publication of grey literature via the internet. The problem could be described as unreliability and instability of grey literature on the internet. Despite the fact that the electronic format has increased the access of grey literature, it does not go down without its own problem as the internet has increased the unreliability of this access because they only exist in the e-format. This situation is worsened by the "here today and gone tomorrow" nature of the documents on the Net (Alberani and De-Castro, 2001). Furthermore, the geographical spread of the various organizations producing grey literature also creates a problem for acquisition. Their location usually requires a lot of traveling and repeated calls to the creating agencies. This could be hazardous to health as well as be a strain on the libraries' funds.

However, efforts have been made in certain international quarters to encourage cooperative acquisition and databases as part of the effort of solving problems of acquisition of grey literature (SIGLE, 2004).



## Management and Use of Grey Literature

Literature has established that the issue of storing and organizing grey literature is an intriguing one. Alemna (2001) described the failure experienced in Ghana over the management of grey literature. These include acquisition, storing, organizing, poor staffing and funding and harsh tropical weather conditions. Some of these problems had been attributed to lack of National Library in Ghana. However, a country like Nigeria that has a National library as well as independent university libraries still experience a lot of problems in the management of their grey collections.

The management of grey literature varies from University libraries to university libraries. For instance, grey literature is administered from different sections at the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. Some materials such as newsletters, university brochures, calendars and handbooks are kept at the Reference section, Government and International Publications are kept at the Documents section while unpublished seminar papers and post-graduate theses are kept at the Africana Section of the library. Again, a library like the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria, also has a separate manuscript collection while it keeps the university postgraduate thesis in the reference section.

Despite the variation in storage and administration, there are still pockets of this grey literature that escape the librarians' monitoring and end up being treated as thrash in the libraries. Also linked with the latter problem is that of cataloguing and classification. There is yet to be a uniform or standardized method of processing the materials. This

literature affirmed may have to be considered by individual university libraries (Mason, 2004). This problem will further precipitate that of poor accessibility if care is not taken by individual libraries to ensure adequate bibliographic information.

In practice, many potential users of grey literature are usually ignorant of their existence in the university libraries. In order to solve this problem, an aggressive practice of current awareness services and selective dissemination of information to the libraries' clientele are desirable.

Observations from university libraries (e.g. The University Library of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye; Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan; Federal University of Technology, Akure and University of Lagos Library) also revealed that quite a number of grey literature exist in flimsy forms which subject them to mishandling and quick deterioration. Efforts need to be made by the libraries' management to put them into shapes and forms that will enhance posterity.

General observations in some Nigeria university libraries revealed that users make quite a great deal of use of materials. However, it should be added that it is only the prominent categories of materials such as seminar papers, post-graduate theses, government and international organisations' publications that the libraries keep track of their usage. Statistics of use of other categories such as university calendars, handbooks, brochures and newsletters are not usually kept by most libraries. This is because most of these other categories are kept on the open shelves where users are free to use and return them at will.



It is also important to add that there are quite a number of grey literature that escape the consciousness of the users, hence rendering them redundant or underutilized in the library. This however, is not totally unrelated to the problem of lack of good bibliographic control of grey literature (Augur, 1989).

Nevertheless, it is an established fact that grey literature is an invaluable source for research and learning. This is summarized again in the submission of the Information World Review as cited by Mason (2004) that grey literature is an unsung hero, the food soldier, the foundation of the building.

### **Prospects of Grey Literature**

Despite all the problems identified with the acquisition, maintenance and use of grey literature. The inherent values still render them an indispensable collection to university libraries especially in developing countries where limited funds are available for library development.

First, grey literature will continue to be a rich source of information that can not be otherwise found in published literature. While most information relating to policy and service are hardly found in published literature, corporate organizations and institutions will continue to produce materials that are homogenous to them. Also, write-ups that appear flimsy or infinitesimal to the 'ordinary eye' will always be found useful and irreplaceable. These include handbooks, repair manuals, tourist guides among others (Weinitraub, 2000).

Furthermore, some materials are socio-cultural in origin. For instance, some African papers will hardly find their way into the published terrain.

Also, grey literature will continue to serve as a basis and springboard for further researches. This is simply because they contain materials that are original and primary in nature.

However, the prospects of grey literature will remain undeveloped if nothing is done to ensure full bibliographic control. A lesson should be learnt from advanced societies where cooperative acquisitions, library networks and databases have been established. SIGLE (System for Information on Grey Literature) for instance, "is a bibliographic database covering European non-conventional (so called grey) literature in the field of pure and applied natural sciences, technology, economics, social sciences and humanities" (SIGLE, 2004).

Likewise a continual lack of awareness of grey literature will hinder the prospects of use of grey literature.

### **Recommendation**

The following recommendations will enhance the acquisition, management use and prospects of grey literature in university libraries of developing countries.

1. Improved bibliographic control of grey literature viz. standardized cataloguing, classification of materials.
2. Creation of databases and interlibrary net-working among university libraries.
3. Improved storage facilities and maintenance of grey literature in university libraries.
4. Intensification of Current Awareness Services (CAS) to users of university libraries.
5. Intensification of Selective Dissemination of Information



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