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Eighth International Conference on Grey Literature: Conference Report

Julia Gelfand

The 2007 conference was held in New Orleans 14 months post-Katrina and at the conference facilities of the University of New Orleans on the banks of Lake Pontchartrain. On the drive from downtown New Orleans to the venue, one could clearly see the post-hurricane renovation and urban renewal underway and detect how long it is taking to see progress towards returning to normal life and routines. Attendees also had a chance to see how conference life and tourism is gradually coming back in the renowned French Quarter.

This international conference alludes to technology over and over again as it reaffirms its theme, "Harnessing the Power of Grey" with four subthemes:

- Collection Development, Collection Policies and Collection Rescue
- Metadata schemes, Repositories and Software, Standards and Quality Assessment
- The Economics of Grey, funding sources, production costs, pricing and investment
- Mapping Grey Resources for Coastal and Aquatic Environments

The conference welcome delivered by Dr. Fredrick Barton, Provost and Vice Chancellor at the University of New Orleans was heartfelt and more meaningful than most conference greetings one can remember. He reminded us loud and clear what coming to New Orleans at this particular juncture in time means by stating how New Orleans "was king of cotton, our city was the richest in the world, as the magnificent homes in the Garden District and along Esplanade Avenue survive to testify". He continued, "The passage of time and the evolution of world economies have diminished New Orleans as a central place of material wealth. But we remain almost

astonishingly culturally rich. Our music and our cuisine are exported to and emulated around the world. Louis Armstrong and Wynton Marsalis learned to lay their trumpets here and have gone on to perform for audiences worldwide. Emeril Lagasse, Paul Prudhomme and Frank Brigtsen are household names for those knowledgeable about gourmet cooking and fine dining. And New Orleans is a city of festivals, a city that likes to dress up and, as our students like to say, also really likes to get down. It is a city that relishes a celebration and, more than any other in America, loves a parade, (as in Mardi Gras) . . . and New Orleans is a city of literary lights".

Barton also shares the personal reminder, "Those of us who hail from New Orleans know something about the great flood of 2005. It was a disaster made not by nature but by man. Hurricane Katrina did not sweep over this city; it broke through to this city. Our levees were high enough, but they were not strong enough. Our homes were lost, our lives were altered, not as an act of God, but as an act of negligence, not as the product of inevitability but as the byproduct of irresponsibility". And with that he emphasizes some of work that would later be shared on the session about coastal erosion and environmental impacts, by eloquently introducing, "The coast line of this state is disappearing at a terrifying rate. Among the results of our evanesced wetlands is the increased reach of hurricanes such as Katrina. Once, stubborn grasses and other swamp vegetation stood as an obstacle to the great storms roaring out the gulf. Land now missing stripped the wind and slowed the force of the tidal surge. But where one hundreds of miles of wetlands grew, now stands only open water, a fast track right to the heart of our city. Learning about coastal erosion,

preserving what we have learned and can learn, expediting access to that knowledge, applying that knowledge as buffer to any repeat of what we have recently endured: this not just our opportunity; this is our duty. And applied writ large to the many crises humankind faces an must face down, this is what you do and why what you do is so very important". I am sure if you were not in New Orleans for the opening of this conference you can feel the bonding and commitment that filled the hall and people from around the world, were touched by these spoken words. One can tell that Provost Barton is a professor of English and author of numerous well-received works of fiction, including *The El Cholo Feeling Passes*, *Courting Pandemonium* and *With Extreme Prejudice*. His short stories have appeared in numerous magazines and in the anthologies *Something in Common and Above Ground*. His novel *A House Divided* is the 2000 winner of the William Faulkner Prize and a jazz opera, *Ash Wednesday* and there are other examples of narrative media, feature writing and film commentary.

After a serious pause and introduction, the opening or keynote session was delivered by Bonnie Carroll, President and Founder of Information International Associates (IIA) based in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The "Shades of Grey" talk assumed that "the electronic world cannot be dealt with as a linear extension of the print world" and how fundamental that understanding is in scholarly communication today as we function in such an increasingly networked environment. Ms. Carroll stressed how the proliferation of data and changes in technologies over time have contributed to the ubiquity of the web and its different layers: surface web, deep web,

public web. Some of the implications of the new digital grey literature reinforce the power of the web, but also suggest the frailty of the web and the non-transparency of content if is not cataloged, and how it takes on new meaning as soon as it is released even though preservation remains a challenge. Among the newest forms of media are the web log or blog where individuals instantaneously become contributor, author and publisher and the wiki where the community of collaborators join together as the central publisher. After providing many examples Ms. Carroll concluded her talk with images of what the vision of the future holds for grey literature with memories of the Star Trek Computer and the late Paul Peters, "Information will be the hunter...". Perhaps new shades of grey have blurred sufficiently so that new definitions are needed or maybe like coffee a new blend is born.

The first session hosted themes related to collection development, collection policies and "collection rescue". This means that the focus was on the collecting institution and three papers reflected different aspects of how this plays out. A very interesting update was provided by a team of librarians, Elizabeth Newbold and Samantha Tillett from the British Library as they demonstrated how grey literature fits into the new model of an institutional paradigm shift from collection development to content strategy. Collection policies at the British Library now reflect a wider range of content so that in addition to traditional "literature", data sets, evidence-based research and the like are included. How this is addressed in such a large enterprise as the British Library suggests a more keen analysis of the collection management costs, the options and challenges for collection management storage and archiving of more eResources and asking how global a collection can be scaled for good management. The second paper originated in the Pacific Rim with authors from Australia, New Zealand and Fiji collaborating on a research project to create community focused digital libraries. Staged in three phases, the proposal is to create a digital library containing grey literature with a "community of practice" model in place to handle the collection

management and to eventually have sound business models in place. The primary author, Cameron Esslemont attracted encouraging responses to his plan.

This reporter presented in this session about how taxonomies of grey literature can serve as components for collection development policies and drew heavily on the social sciences and information science literature to document different taxonomic applications. This included the work of Benjamin Bloom, Benjamin Schneideman, Edward Tufte, Sam Demas, Bonnie Nardi and Christine Borgman among others. Clearly, parallel analogies can be drawn suggesting the terms, resource identification, function, relevance and knowledge remain fairly constant in most collection policies over time. "Format agnostic" is the conclusion of this paper as it describes grey literature in electronic output.

The second session of contributed papers had as the central theme, metadata schemes, repositories, software and standards and several interesting papers were delivered. A team of collaborators from NASA Goddard addressed their institutional repository and the historical documents that are now finding their presence there. By extending Dublin Core and morphing into the Goddard Core Metadata Element Set the resources can be described with additional elements and the byproduct was that better discovery and evaluation in the Goddard context of project management enabled users to find and evaluate the usefulness of retrieved documents in cross-repository collections. Various library applications now use this framework from the early 1984 Hitchhiker Project to the Landsat Legacy Project, it is clear to see how collaboration has paid off with different federal agencies participating.

The prolific team of Keith Jeffery and Anne Asserson collaborated on another piece, "Hyperactive Grey Objects" which builds on earlier work. The call for a new paradigm to integrate grey literature with white literature and other R&D outputs (including much non-print and hard to find and describe content including data, software and patents) that can now promote and manage data curation, provenance digital rights and support user privacy and security is a long time in coming and results because the use of passive

catalogs of metadata can not scale as eResources or the new grey literature reproduces itself so rapidly. The wrapping mechanism around metadata assumes that an ambient GRIDs structure or environment contains it. Hyperlinking is conducted and can be carried out either passively or aggressively using intelligent system agents. Its potential utility and success to support large R&D output is anything short of astonishing as access can be granted very quickly as it can be scaled and not require an inordinate amount of human intervention.

Anthony Troman also from the British Library provided an update on the UK Electronic Theses Online Service known as EThOS. This national database of UK theses can be achieved with a single interface and offer wider visibility and distribution. One of the clearest papers about metadata applications was delivered by Daniela Luzi and Fabrizio Ricci and Luca Serbanata when they explored metadata-based analysis to improve clinical trial exchanges. This work promotes standardization and the social goodwill of clinical trials, which by their nature are inconsistent and not always open to everyone who wants to participate. The complexity of the protocols associated with clinical trials confirms the deep intensity of grey when everything must be coded to protect patient privacy as registries are developed and then mapped against specific demographics. Interestingly, one can observe the differences of the patient or consumer's role vs that of the Health Authority.

GL7 in Nancy birthed the "Nancy Style" to guarantee quality control in document production and distribution and this was introduced by Paola De Castro from Rome. At GL8 she collaborated with international colleagues to better refine and demonstrate the "awareness and empowerment of new forms of grey literature". Metadata encouraged new global standards as GL production in both national and discipline collections are released.

Practicing the Nancy Style, Rosa Di Cesare and colleagues from the National Center of Research on Population and Political Science highlighted the "insight" and "feeling" of grey literature managers towards traditional (old) and digital (new) issues connected with grey

literature. Clearly, this the scholars' preference to blend and increasingly produce electronically.

Comparisons of international copyright is not easy but the blurring distorts the sameness and reduces the differences as scholarly communication becomes increasingly global. This opinion was explored well by Marcus Banks (USA) and Cees de Blaaij (Netherlands) and clearly as individual publishing extends over the net at rapid rates of increase compared to the multimedia content that is released by commercial or society publishers. There remains lots of unknowns but this paper asks all the right questions. The European context was explored by Christiane Stock and Joachim Schopfel from INIST in France. In a second piece, this team joined up with Dominic Farace and Jerry Frantzen team from the Netherlands as they confirmed cost-effectiveness in generating new scholarship compared to higher costs from traditional literature both to get product in the marketplace and for consumers, specifically libraries to acquire or license it. Thus, grey literature has economic attributes that continue to make it attractive compared to its competition.

Being in New Orleans, one really had to patiently wait until the second day of the conference for the local environmental landscape to be unveiled. This happened with a fascinating paper on the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands

which are quickly eroding. Over one million acres of land loss or about ten square miles effecting wetlands due to hurricane seasons which have taken serious life and made permanent sacrifices to this region. Gina Costello from Louisiana State University gave compelling evidence about this once remarkable and unique geography and how it has shrunk. By creating a database that will track the changes and monitor what forms of literature state and federal workers are relying upon is of great merit to the collection by mapping agencies. Somewhat related to this was a very thoughtful paper by a team of colleagues at the University of South Florida on the impact of grey literature in advancing global karst research. Of significant local interest to the karst community in Florida, is the new Karst Information Portal that has been created and was demonstrated.

Also returning to another GL conference, Bertrum MacDonald along with colleagues from the School of Information Management at Dählhousie built on earlier work and explored the diffusion and impact of grey literature released by the International Intergovernmental Scientific Groups, specifically the Case of the Gulf of Maine on the Marine Environment.

Another fisheries project was described by colleagues at Oregon State University and FAO and more grey literature in public health was described by a team from the University of

Washington. They called for a customizable prototype public health knowledge management system to respond to users' information needs and NLM is slow to respond to this type of request. Other consumer and public health archives of grey literature already exist with the largest and most prominent among them at the New York Academy of Medicine and some smaller publisher-based collections on the horizon. Interestingly, this can be done relatively inexpensively and thus an update of this work I sensed would be welcome at EDUCAUSE conference later in 2007.

Small in nature and somewhat smaller than some recent years, this conference in New Orleans had focus and aplomb as it allowed a revisit of the gulf region and a reason to learn about some excellent examples of regional grey literature.

The Ninth International Conference will take place 10-11 December 2007 in Antwerp, Belgium with the theme, "Grey Foundations in Information Landscape" and information will be available at: www.greynet.org/

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