

Title of Paper: **Global Grey Literature in Health: Identification, Preservation, and Sustainability**

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The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) Library has been aggregating grey literature in public and global health since 1999 through print and web. The *Grey Literature Report's* primary focus has been on the United States with a rapidly growing interest in the more global environment. NYAM has a growing interest in expanding the global perspective of the report which is motivated by the desire to increase capacity to identify information produced in the global world by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies as a result of the engagement of the world in technology. The NYAM Library holds a common concern in sharing best practices and lessons learned via the dissemination of information that is often hard to find and a recognition that the capture of this information and the preservation of it, whether print or digital, may, in many cases, be the only record of documents in the future. The NYAM Library believes that its report is a benefit to developing transparency of grey literature as an "added value" to research in health, and particularly global urban, public, environmental, and social health. Finally, and equally important to all this is the Library's interest in maintaining an alignment with the mission and interests of NYAM.

This paper outlines some first identified steps that the NYAM Library is taking to broaden the coverage of the *Grey Literature Report* to represent global coverage in undeveloped countries. We are focused on the countries of the global south where health issues are critical to future development. Because many of these countries do not have stable municipal infrastructures that allow for traditional approaches to literature identifications, aggregation, and dissemination, NYAM will be developing strategies to identify grey literature in many different ways. We will document our approaches to these new geographic areas covering how we identified where we will begin; the analysis of what we needed to do; and the steps we took to implement this analysis. We will share the workflow that we create from these strategies and

the successes and disappointments that may develop from these approaches within our newly expanded geographic focus. This paper relates our first attempt at establishing collaboration with four African universities to collect grey literature in their respective countries.

Background:

NYAM's Grey Literature Project produces a bimonthly report, *the Grey Literature Report*, which has been published on the web since 1999. The report provides recently identified grey literature in the areas of health and science policy, urban health, public health, health services research and health of special populations. Over the past year, the project, with input from colleagues from the International Society of Urban Health, has begun to collect grey literature in these categories more broadly seeking to develop links to enable us to identify such information in developing countries.

Goal and Brief Methodology of the Report

Currently, NYAM librarians scan over 750 organizations to identify material for inclusion in the *Report*. The organizations are both national and international producers of grey literature. NYAM librarians select and acquire print and digital resources, as defined by scope and collection criteria for the project, and catalog the documents into OCLC and the library's catalogue. The Report can be accessed at http://www.nyam.org/library/pages/grey_literature_report. We are the only library in the United States aggregating this health information formally and offering accessibility to researchers through an indexed method. Over 1300 individuals and organizations are regular subscribers, and we collaborate currently with a Kaiser.edu project (Kaiser Family Foundation) to co-brand and promote the information to users. Subscriptions are currently free

Expanding collaboration

The Grey Literature Project (GLP) team was and is seeking to partner with librarians in other countries who would be interested in contributing their grey literature knowledge and information to this global project. It would allow freely available access to information that is hard to find and of importance not only to users in the specific international country, but to the world. In turn, the Grey Literature *Report* indexes grey information from other countries and it is this that we would hope to expand.

In conjunction with the 2010 annual meeting of the International Society on Urban Health, held in New York City and hosted at NYAM on October 27 - 29, 2010, we sought to identify a number of librarians from African countries and invite them to attend the conference as an opportunity to discuss the thinking behind the grey literature project, determine their needs and interest, and, if there was enthusiasm for the project, proceed to organize an effective strategy to develop and activate an online network as the first step in what we hope may become a global grey literature network.

Since the Project is a library project, we were seeking librarians who understand the processes of information sciences, such as selection, indexing, copyright, standardization, etc. It does not preclude individuals who are working in a library without library science training, but have a strong understanding of library process. It was and is not limited to any particular category of library, but may include hospital and health libraries, government agencies, non-profit agencies, university and academic libraries and/or departmental libraries collecting in the defined areas. It may even interest public libraries where the staff is knowledgeable of where and how information is produced in their country.

We were fortunate to connect to the Carnegie Corporation's Project for African Librarians and obtain travel funding from the corporation to invite librarians from the institutions that Carnegie currently works with to attend the aforementioned conference and at the same time meet with us on our Grey Literature Project.

In July 2010, The New York Academy of Medicine Library approached fifteen African academic libraries that receive support from the Carnegie Corporation seeking in-person discussions about their interest in forming collaborative partnerships to expand the content of the NYAM *Grey Literature Report* project. Although there was much interest, many could not attend due to the short length of time to obtain visas or other commitments. NYAM was very excited however to host six librarians from the following four universities:

- University of Witwatersrand, South Africa
- University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
- University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania
- University of Ghana-Legon, Balme Library and the College of Health Sciences

Outcomes

Within the framework of the larger conference program, we set aside specific time to meet and learn about these African libraries and their representatives' interests in grey literature in public health and to share with them our hopes for expansion through collaboration for the *Grey Literature Report*.

After three days of a very intensive agenda of discussions and questions and learning about each other, the group came together with some specific goals and objectives to move the expansion of the *Grey Literature Report* forward in partnership.

The goals for this potential expansion fell into specific areas. The first topic addressed was the aggregation of both retrospective and current materials available in these universities and their countries. The group agreed that a major task is to initiate the aggregation of African grey literature, both retrospective and current, into NYAM's *Grey Literature Report* for dissemination internationally to users seeking grey information in global health. The steps to make this happen were listed as such:

- Training by NYAM Library staff on selection processes and scanning techniques with African libraries' staff
- Identification and selection of grey literature material by African librarians
- Scanning and conversion of selected documents by African Librarians
- Indexing and assignment of MESH headings
- PDF conversion of documents
- Deposit into respective Institutional Repository , if desired
- Links sent to NYAM Library (most likely by e-mail) for inclusion of material in the *Grey Literature Report*
- NYAM catalogs material into bimonthly reports and adds producers to the list of scanned resources
- Credit to all contributing institutions

Recognizing that this is a very ambitious undertaking, it was acknowledged that there were some basic steps to be put into place. All the African libraries were in need of scanners, recommendations on scanning equipment, and funding to purchase the hardware. NYAM librarians needed to produce a manual that will assist the African librarians in the selection and identification process of grey literature for the report using the criteria for selection that is currently in place, if possible. Most critical, prior to next steps, is the administrative approval from each of their universities to participate in the project with NYAM.

The group also identified as a collaborative task the promotion of the concept of grey literature in Africa and identification of agencies in Africa that publish such information. The creation of such identified lists would lead to culling of grey information from their publications and then the expanded access and discovery for international users through the *Grey Literature Report*. Much of this as described would be dependent on the contributions of our guest librarians to identify the producers of grey literature in their respective countries. Specific outcomes from achieving this would result in the following:

- Identification of other sources of African material (e.g. from Health Systems Trust and other NGOs)
- Creation of lists of NGO and other agencies by country
- Identification of other possible collaborating partners, most likely via SANHIP (the existing South African National Health Information Partnership)
- Incorporation of other partners' material as suggested

As noted earlier, all the collaborative work will require formal Memorandum of Understanding to be signed between individual institutions and NYAM; the identified work would require funding with regards to hardware requirements, software development, and personnel support

to expand the grey literature project. As of this writing, we have received notice from two of our colleagues, that they have administrative approval to proceed.

In looking to the future, the list below reflects the advantages of this project to African libraries, their home institutions, and NYAM, as written by one of our African colleagues who summarized the meeting. The collaborative project will:

- Make unpublished research in the broad field of public health and health policy available internationally, thus increasing individual institutions' international footprints
- Increased visibility of partners "unpublished" research has potential for moving organizations forward in terms of the vision of institution as a top university
- Populate the individual organization's Institutional Repository
- Preserve valuable material from African collections internationally, as documents will be archived for digital preservation on several international servers
- Offer cost savings (in equipment and human resources) as libraries will not need to back up their own digitized material
- Create an opportunity to begin a digitization project on a small scale, with minimal capital or human resource expenditure
- Afford a mechanism for incorporating previously non-catalogued, ephemeral public health material into the local and international body of literature
- Make available previously unavailable, or hard to find, material to international researchers
- Afford health policy makers access to information to inform national health policy decisions
- Offer the prestige of collaborating together
- Explore possible grant funding for archiving and digitizing of all libraries' materials, should the project grow, based on learned skills acquired through this project.

The group as a whole felt that we had accomplished much in three short days. We knew that there was much work ahead and the challenges of returning to our respective institutions and being engulfed with other priorities loomed ahead, especially with distance and communication issues to deal with as part of the work. NYAM also expressed the desire to proceed slowly as the *Grey Literature Report* was in the midst of a site redesign and database enhancement due for release in early spring 2011. We are all realistic about the length of time such a project may take to implement.

To date, follow up has proceeded with a report to Carnegie Corporation submitted, a Google Group established for librarians to communicate with each other, and shared scanner

information distributed. NYAM currently is finishing up the redesign of the *Grey Literature Report*. We encourage all to stay tuned over the next year to follow our progress.

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