

The Way Forward in Grey Literature Publishing: Call for a Grey Literature Publisher Commons

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Introduction

GreyNet through the years has focused on the supply-side of grey literature in order to respond to the problems and issues confronting the demand-side. In 2023, GreyNet published the first edition of PUBGREY, a Registry of Publishers in Grey Literature¹. This demonstrated that organizations in (non)government, academics, and business were ready to embrace the role of publisher. While focusing on the publication of its current document types, GreyNet also chose not to lose sight of its many and diverse collections of grey literature already in-house archived. This prompted an inventory of its collections and serials. That initiative now serves as GreyNet's Open Data Project² and includes over twenty such works.

With the third expanded edition of the PUBGREY Registry in 2026³, forty publishers had already signed on. This together with the initial results of the Open Data Project inspired a way to bring publishers in grey literature even closer together. While the PUBGREY Registry provided linking and cross-linking via digital persistent identifiers and while the Open Data Project signaled advantages for both GreyNet's current and prior publications, it was held that more interaction between and among the publishers would prove even more beneficial. The time was opportune to organize an onsite event and invite the organizations registered in PUBGREY as well as others among GreyNet's community of practice. The event was titled PubForum'26, a Global Forum for Publishers in Grey Literature⁴. Among the presentations at PubForum'26, GreyNet proposed the idea of forming a grey literature Publisher Commons. In this way, publishers diverse in scale as well as subject areas could pool their experience and expertise for the benefit and whole of grey literature publishing. The remainder of this paper will provide a more detailed account of the developments leading up to a proposed Grey Literature Publisher Commons.

GreyNet's Focus on the Supply-side of Grey Literature

By drawing public awareness to grey literature without at the same time incorporating the results of studies over the past thirty years would be counterproductive. A campaign of public awareness with a new focus on grey literature is required. However, such an initiative can only be achieved in collaboration with the many grey literature stakeholders led by the publishers in grey literature, who are on the forefront of research and innovation in their specific domains of science. GreyNet International owing to the support of its associate members has over the past three decades sought to promote and undertake research, publication, open access, education, and public awareness of grey literature. Emphasis on its supply side was always its starting point from which the field could confront the problems voiced by the demand side and adequately address them.

PUBGREY Registry of Publishers in Grey Literature

PUBGREY GreyNet International seeks to maintain a registry of organizations that serve as publishers in the field of grey literature. The PUBGREY Registry contains standardized records submitted by the publishing bodies. Records include the sector of information, document types, publication formats, main areas of coverage, submission and

acceptance, open access compliance, contact details, and identifying characteristics of the organization. PUBGREY Registry is a unique information resource connecting both the supply and demand sides of grey literature.

GreyNet's Open Data Project



Over the past thirty years, GreyNet International has initiated multiple projects dealing with grey literature. Some have advanced to sustained information resources, while others have been discontinued. Since the content of the latter still remains within GreyNet's inhouse archive, the Open Data Project would further secure their compliance with FAIR principles⁵. For this reason, GreyNet strives to make all of its twenty plus information resources openly accessible for purposes of referencing, citation, and reuse. Some of these resources will entail DOI minting or the assignment of other identifiers, the addition of metadata, and the designation of URLs and/or landing pages.

PubForum'26, Global Forum for Publishers in Grey Literature



Global Forum for Publishers

GreyNet International is proud to announce that the Global Forum for Publishers in Grey Literature was hosted by TIB – Leibniz Information Centre for Science and Technology on June 8-9, 2026 in Hannover, Germany. PubForum'26 provided a joint platform of stakeholders in grey literature. Publishers in grey literature are from various sectors and levels of (non)government, academics, and business. The list of document types both in textual and non-textual formats is ever increasing, much like the diverse coverage of topics concerning science and society. Publishers in grey literature are at the forefront of information and scholarly communication. They are not only responsible for the review process but also for rich metadata and persistent identifiers unique to their publications, authors, organizations, and funders.

The Idea behind a Grey Literature Publisher Commons



While organizations producing grey literature are diverse in scale as well as in subject areas, the works that they produce, the value-added information and rich metadata they assign, and the open access they provide is a clear demonstration of their publisher identity. Bringing multiple grey literature organizations together into a Publisher Commons would certainly further raise the level of recognition of each and all. A Grey Literature Publisher Commons would provide a point of access for the multiple document types and formats of textual and non-textual grey literature publications. This would ensure their discoverability, while increasing the visibility of the publications as well as their publishing bodies. A Grey Literature Publisher Commons would create and support a collaborative environment in which shared experience and expertise could be readily tapped. It would further lead in developing and sustaining resources required for grey literature publishers to maintain a cutting edge in research required for innovation. The launch of a Grey Literature Publisher Commons would likewise benefit from an existing network *i.e.* GreyNet International. In this way, it would be able to count on the support of an organization with over thirty years of experience in this field of information with established contacts worldwide.

In Summary

The supply-side of grey literature defines the future of this field of information. GreyNet International is convinced of this and has sought to identify organizations within its community of practice that

endorse their role as publisher. The PUBGREY Registry is in itself a case in point. GreyNet further maintains that the wealth of grey literature publications that have been previously archived, but are however less discoverable for potential users would benefit from its Open Data Project. Here, active digital persistent identifiers are minted and assigned to both its current and prior publications. Still yet another initiative to bring publishers in grey literature together beyond a registry was to organize an onsite event, which led to PubForum'26, a Global Forum for Publishers in Grey Literature. During this first forum of its kind, GreyNet proposed the launch of a Grey Literature Publisher Commons that would spearhead the direction in which publishing becomes the guarantee of the value and future of grey literature for science and society. It is considered that if the Global Forum for Publishers in Grey Literature were to be continued in 2027, the launch of a Grey Literature Publisher Commons would be its outcome.

References

¹ PUBGREY Registry of Publishers in Grey Literature 2023
<http://grevguiderep.isti.cnr.it/linkdoc.php?idcode=2023-RGL90-001&authority=GreyGuide&collection=RGL&langver=en>

² Open Data Project
<https://greynet.org/researchandeducation/opendataprotect.html>

³ PUBGREY Registry of Publishers in Grey Literature 2026
<https://doi.org/10.26069/greynet-2026-000.924-gn>

⁴ PubForum'26, Global Forum for Publishers in Grey Literature
<https://greynet.org/pubforum26.html>

⁵ FAIR Principles
<https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>