

# Availability, Accessibility and Utilization of Grey Literature for Quality Research by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi

Upev, Michael Terver (CLN)

Library Department Federal University of Agriculture PMB 2373, Makurdi Benue State-Nigeria

Terna, Ramatu A

Library Department Federal University of Agriculture PMB 2373, Makurdi Benue State-Nigeria

Beetseh, Kwaghga

Library Department Federal University of Agriculture PMB 2373, Makurdi Benue State-Nigeria

## Abstract

This study examined availability, accessibility and utilization of grey literature for quality research by Postgraduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi. The study had five objectives and five research questions. The study adopted survey research design. Population for this study was 89 subjects comprising all staff both Professionals and Para-professional from University of Agriculture Makurdi library. The entire population of 89 subjects was used for the study as sample size. Instrument used for the study was constructed questionnaire. Data was collected and analysed using mean and standard deviation. Study found out grey literature (GL) are not accessed and utilized by postgraduate students. Findings of the study also revealed that many challenges faced by postgraduate Students in accessing grey literature. It was found that there are strategies that promote utilization of grey literature by post graduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi. The study concluded that there is need to improve on the management and use of grey literature. It was recommended that government should make provision for adequate funds for acquisition of grey literature in University libraries, University management should ensure that relevant materials to current curricula and teacher/student interests are supplied in the library and the University management should embark on regular review and supply of new grey materials the library.

**Keywords:** Availability, Accessibility, Utilization of Grey Literature, Quality Research and Postgraduate Students

## Introduction

The availability, accessibility and utilization of information of grey literature through an effective dissemination network represent a necessary pre-condition for the emergence of a crop of well-informed citizenry. Information must be available, adequate and accessible in order to be presented in a way that is acceptable to facilitate its acceptability, hence utilization. Thus, it is a vital commodity in every environment and its use is largely determined by its availability and accessibility.

However, availability of grey literature source does not necessarily translate to its accessibility, because the source may be available but access to it is prevented for one reason or the other (Shaariful 2012). Accessibility could mean authorization, opportunity, or right to access records or retrieve information from different sources of information such as internet, radio, posters, bulletins, newspapers, journals and libraries and information centres. Availability of information entails its provision and supply at the right quantity and time, while its utilisation refers to the practical and adequate use of resources and materials on information identified and acquired by user for the purpose as solving problem (Emasaelu, 2014). Therefore, accurate and credible information and its accessibility in whatever medium and quantity will be meaningless if it does not meet the need of the audience in terms of economic, social, political, cultural, scientific and technological considerations.

Osayand & Upebor (2012) Gyasi (2003) defines literature in its broad sense as 'anything that is written', while Rees (2007) sees it in the narrow sense of 'writing which expresses and communicate thought, feelings and attitudes towards life. Literature is thus summed up as permanent expression(s) in words (written or spoken), especially arranged in pleasing and accepted pattern or forms such as grey type.

The term "grey literature" is used to describe publications not published commercially or indexed by major database vendors. It is occasionally the sole source for specific research questions. Grey literature brings connotations of bleakness, apathy, indifference, and questionable authority to mind (Mason, 2009 & Popoola, 2000). Upon investigation, this is far from truth, unless you find research papers from eminent researchers to be boring. Grey literature has some connection to the brain's "grey matter" since so much of it seems highly intellectual and is significant for research and development in many subject areas.

Grey literature publications are important materials that libraries, especially academic libraries must acquire

to support research. Although not rigorously peer reviewed, they contribute greatly to national development since they sometimes originate from scholars. Grey literature materials do not have any ISBN or ISSN and so cannot be easily tracked down or accessed by a large group of clients except some concerted efforts are made. This explains the reason why it is called grey. Grey is used to connote something that is not clear, wholly, that is different, while literature in this context means publications. This view was strongly supported by Mason (2007) who wrote that grey literature brings connotation of bleakness, apathy, indifference and questionable authority to mind. They are not controlled by commercial publishing interests because they are usually issued by government, academia, pressure groups, trade unions, industries etc. Grey literature materials are publications without commercial purpose; articles and information published especially on the Internet, without a commercial purpose or the mediation of a commercial publisher. Generally, they are materials which are not attainable through the conventional channels and not available through normal book selling channels used for research (Okoroma 2012; Weintraub, 2006).

Research is a process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through planned and systematic collection, classification, analysis and interpretation of data. It is a logical way of finding solutions to an identified problem. Precisely; research is the application of scientific methods to problem-solving which involves careful observations, reliable measurement of phenomena, objective interpretation of facts, and validation of accepted theories or their revision based on new evidence. Research is aimed at finding solutions to the multifarious and multi-faceted problems confronting us in various fields of endeavour. From the fore-going, the quest to know investigate, examine, study, explore, delve into, or make inquires about the unknown using a systematic approach is referred to as research Emaikwu (2015).

Quality research is the one that has a good research problem. Before any problem can be judged as a good problem, it must possess the following qualities: The topic must be researchable: Being researchable means that pertinent data for solving the problem are available and accessible. It also means that such research can be comprehensively carried out in replicated if need be Emaikwu (2013).

Quality research most commonly also refers to the scientific process encompassing all aspects of study design; in particular, it pertains to the judgment regarding the match between the methods and questions, selection of subjects, measurement of outcomes, and protection against systematic bias, nonsystematic bias, and inferential error. Principles and standards for quality research designs are commonly found in texts, reports, essay, and guides to research design and methodology.

The end result of every research is to increase productivity, Research output of postgraduate students includes examination, assignments; seminar papers, undergraduate project report and to increase the quality of research by postgraduate students. The findings of the research presented in descriptive statements could also be disseminated by researchers. Aina, (2003) Popoola, (2008) asserted that one of the critical factors used in determining productivity is research output. Research as an important component of any discipline, is critical to the growth of postgraduate students prospecting to become information professionals. Hence the issue of productivity (research output) of postgraduate students is paramount to policy makers in the library.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to investigate availability, accessibility and utilization of grey literature for quality research postgraduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi. Specifically, the study attempts to:

1. Find out the type of grey literature (GL) accessed and utilized by postgraduate students of university of Agriculture Makurdi
2. Ascertain the extent to which grey literature (GL) is accessed by postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.
3. Determine the extent to which grey literature (GL) is utilized by postgraduate Students in university of Agriculture Makurdi.
4. Identify the challenges faced by postgraduate Students in accessing grey literature in University of Agriculture Makurdi.
5. To determine the strategies needed to promote utilization of grey literature by post graduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What types of grey literature (GL) are accessed and utilized by postgraduate students of university of Agriculture Makurdi?
2. To what extent are the grey literature (GL) accessed by postgraduate students of university of Agriculture Makurdi?
3. To what extent are grey literature (GL) utilized by postgraduate students of University Agriculture Makurdi?

4. What are the challenges faced by postgraduate students in accessing and utilizing grey literature (GL) in university of Agriculture Makurdi library?
5. What are the strategies needed to promote utilization of grey literature (GL) by post graduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi?

### Methodology

The area of the study is Benue State. This study employed a survey research design. The population for this study was 89 subjects comprising all staff both Professionals and Para-professional from University of Agriculture Makurdi library. There was no sampling for the study. The entire population was used for the study as sample because the population size could be handled effectively by the researcher.

The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire titled “Availability, Accessibility and Utilization of Grey Literature for Quality Research by Postgraduate Students (AAUGLPS). The instrument which was developed by the researcher was divided into six sections based on the research objectives. The questionnaire had restricted response options of highly accessed, accessed, fairly accessed and not accessed, very high extent, high extent, low extent, very low extent, strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The data for this study will be collected by the researcher and 3 research assistants.

Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. Mean was used to answer the research questions. The bench mark for this was 2.50 ( $4+3+2+1=10/4=2.50$ ). The decision rule was: **any items with a mean value of 2.50 or above was regarded as high or agree while any item with a mean value of less than 2.50 was regarded as low or disagree.**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Research Questions 1

What types of grey literature (GL) are accessed and utilized by postgraduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi?

Data for answering research question 1 is presented in Table 1:

**Table 1:** Mean of Respondents on the type of Grey Literature (GL) accessed and utilized by postgraduate students

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
1	Calendars	38	10	15	26	89	2.67	1.29	Accessed
2	Clippings	19	4	41	25	89	2.19	1.07	Not Accessed
3	Company reports	17	3	53	16	89	2.23	0.96	Not Accessed
4	Guides information leaflets	15	21	28	25	89	2.29	1.05	Not Accessed
5	Menus	20	18	37	14	89	2.49	1.01	Not Accessed
6	Newsletters	22	1	48	18	89	2.30	1.05	Not Accessed
7	Newspapers	43	10	23	13	89	2.93	1.15	Accessed
8	Press release	19	21	32	17	89	2.47	1.03	Not Accessed
9	Society ephemera	22	17	27	23	89	2.42	1.12	Not Accessed

**Source:** Field survey, 2018

Result in Table 1 shows that out of 9 items, 2 had a mean value of 2.67 to 2.93 while 7 had their mean values ranging from 2.19 to 2.49 and were below the bench mark of 2.50. This shows that the respondents agreed that the 7 items are the type of Grey Literature (GL) accessed and utilized by postgraduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.

### Research Questions 2

To what extent are the grey literature (GL) accessed by postgraduate students of university of Agriculture Makurdi?

Data for answering research question 2 is presented in Table 2:

**Table 2:** Mean of Respondents on the extent to which grey literature (GL) is accessed by postgraduate Students

S/N	Item	VLE	L	G	VGE	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
10	Calendars	37	10	23	19	89	2.73	1.21	GE
11	Clippings	4	43	20	22	89	2.32	0.90	LE
12	Company reports	15	33	20	21	89	2.47	1.03	LE
13	Guides information leaflets	8	47	19	15	89	2.53	0.87	GE
14	Menus	1	48	21	19	89	2.34	0.82	LE
15	Newsletters	8	16	50	15	89	2.11	0.82	LE
16	Newspapers	51	15	16	7	89	3.23	1.01	GE
17	Press release	32	17	15	25	89	2.62	1.23	GE
18	Society ephemera	17	4	35	33	89	2.05	1.09	LE

**Source:** Field survey, 2018

Result in Table 2 shows that out of 9 items, 2 had their mean values ranged from 2.62 to 2.73 while 7 had their grand mean values ranging from 2.11 to 2.47 and were below the bench mark of 2.50. This shows that the respondents agreed that the extent to which grey literature (GL) is accessed by postgraduate Students is low.

### Research Questions 3

To what extent are grey literature (GL) utilized by postgraduate students of University Agriculture Makurdi?

Data for answering research question 3 is presented in Table 3:

**Table 3:** Mean of Respondents on the extent to which grey literature (GL) is utilized by postgraduate Students

S/N	Item	VLE	L	G	VGE	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
19	Calendars	15	2	30	42	89	1.89	1.08	LE
20	Clippings	19	6	24	40	89	2.04	1.17	LE
21	Company reports	18	15	30	26	89	2.28	1.09	LE
22	Guides information leaflets	8	21	29	31	89	1.98	0.82	LE
23	Menus	2	1	30	56	89	1.43	0.63	LE
24	Newsletters	22	12	17	38	89	1.35	0.64	LE
25	Newspapers	2	2	21	64	89	2.20	1.23	LE
26	Press release	2	1	25	61	89	1.37	0.62	LE
27	Society ephemera	15	4	40	30	89	2.04	1.03	LE

**Source:** Field survey, 2018

Result in Table 3 shows that 9 items had their mean values of 2.67 to 3.26 while 7 items had their grand mean values ranging from 1.37 to 2.28 and were below the bench mark of 2.50. This shows that the extent to which grey literature (GL) is utilized by postgraduate Students is low.

### Research Questions 4

What are the challenges faced by postgraduate students in accessing and utilizing grey literature (GL) in University of Agriculture Makurdi library?

Data for answering research question 4 is presented in Table 4 below:

**Table 4:** Mean of Respondents on the challenges faced by postgraduate Students in accessing grey literature

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
28	Critically inadequate funding for acquisition of grey literature	50	11	16	12	89	3.11	1.13	Agree
29	Irrelevant materials to current curricula and teacher/student interests	30	10	33	16	89	2.61	1.13	Agree
30	No budgets for stock upgrading or replenishment grey materials	29	12	41	7	89	2.71	1.01	Agree
31	Wear and tear grey materials	23	27	18	21	89	2.58	1.11	Agree
32	Theft and loss of grey literature	33	22	29	5	89	2.93	0.96	Agree
33	Lack of understanding by both teachers and students of the role and function of grey literature	34	4	39	12	89	2.67	1.12	Agree
34	Untrained and poor training university librarians	38	2	40	9	89	2.78	1.11	Agree
35	Poor library grey literature management systems	31	28	22	8	89	2.92	0.97	Agree
36	Lack of sufficient library premises to stock grey	29	26	15	19	89	2.73	1.13	Agree

**Source:** Field survey, 2018

Result in Table 4 shows that all the 9 items had their mean values ranged from 2.58 to 3.11 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. This shows that the items are challenges faced by postgraduate Students in accessing grey literature in University of Agriculture Makurdi library.

### Research Questions 5

What are the strategies needed to promote utilization of grey literature (GL) by post graduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi?

Data for answering research question 5 is presented in Table 5 below:

**Table 5:** Mean of Respondents on the strategies needed to promote utilization of grey literature

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
37	Provision of adequate funds for acquisition of grey literature	63	5	14	7	89	3.39	1.01	Agree
38	Supply of relevant materials to current curricula and teacher/student interests	30	10	36	13	89	2.64	1.10	Agree
39	Estimation of good budgets for stock upgrading or replenishment grey materials	29	8	39	13	89	2.59	1.09	Agree
40	Regular review and supply of new grey materials	28	26	13	22	89	2.67	1.16	Agree
41	Setting up tight security guards to prevent theft and loss of grey literature	29	29	25	6	89	2.91	0.93	Agree
42	Creation of proper awareness to both teachers and students on the role of grey literature	35	1	39	14	89	2.64	1.16	Agree
43	Employment of trained university librarians	39	8	36	6	89	2.89	1.05	Agree
44	Ensure routine maintenance culture of grey literature	21	23	10		89	2.91	1.05	Agree
45	Acquisition of adequate space to stock grey literature	28	28	19	14	89	2.79	1.06	Agree
46	Acquisition of adequate space to stock grey literature	24	30	17	18	89	2.67	1.08	Agree

**Source:** Field survey, 2018

Result in Table 5 shows that all the 10 items had their mean values ranged from 2.59 to 3.39 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. This shows that the items are the strategies needed to promote utilization of grey literature in University of Agriculture Makurdi library.

### Discussion of Findings

Research question one was to find out the type of grey literature (GL) accessed and utilized by Postgraduate Students of university of Agriculture Makurdi. Findings revealed that calendars and newspapers are accessed while clippings, company reports, guides information leaflets, menus, newsletters, press release and society ephemera are not accessed by Postgraduate Students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.

Research question two was on extent are the grey literature (GL) accessed by Postgraduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi. Findings revealed that calendars and newspapers are accessed at great extent while clippings, company reports, guides information leaflets, menus, newsletters, press release and society ephemera are not accessed.

Research question three was extent are grey literature (GL) utilized by Postgraduate students of University Agriculture Makurdi. Findings revealed that calendars and newspapers are used are great extent while the extent to which clippings, company reports, guides information leaflets, menus, newsletters, press release and society ephemera are utilized is low.

Research question four was on the challenges faced by Postgraduate students in accessing and utilizing grey literature (GL) in University of Agriculture Makurdi library. Findings revealed that

Critically inadequate funding for acquisition of grey literature, irrelevant materials to current curricula and teacher/student interests, no budgets for stock upgrading or replenishment grey materials, wear and tear grey materials, theft and loss of grey literature, lack of understanding by both teachers and students of the role and function of grey literature, untrained and poor training university librarians, poor library grey literature management systems, lack of sufficient library premises to stock grey, insufficient shelving, furniture, equipment or security and lack of money to undertake regular maintenance of grey literature are the major challenges affecting the utilization and access to grey literature Postgraduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.

Research question five was on the strategies needed to promote utilization of grey literature (GL) by Postgraduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi. Findings revealed that provision of adequate funds for acquisition of grey literature, supply of relevant materials to current curricula and teacher/student interests,

estimation of good budgets for stock upgrading or replenishment grey materials, regular review and supply of new grey materials, setting up tight security guards to prevent theft and loss of grey literature, creation of proper awareness to both teachers and students on the role of grey literature, employment of trained university librarians, ensure routine maintenance culture of grey literature, acquisition of adequate space to stock grey literature and provision of sufficient shelving, furniture, equipment were the strategies needed to promote utilization of grey literature (GL) by Postgraduate students of University of Agriculture Makurdi.

### Conclusion

The increasing demands on published material occasioned by the rapid rate of student's enrolment in universities calls for a change from the self-centered acquisition of conventional published materials to acquisition of grey literature especially the literature produce/circulate within the locality of the users. This is to augment the costly, scarcely and sparsely distributed published materials that are really seen in localities. This shift demands for efficient and effective management of grey literature resources to facilitate usage. Hence the study that investigated the management and use of this important resource in academic libraries of tertiary institutions which produce and use large part of it carried out. The research discovered fair treatment of grey literature resources in the library studied and exposes where the library still needs to pay a closer attention to, as well as suggestions, with a view of improving management and use of grey literature. Implementation of these suggestions is timely, to harness the values of grey literature in libraries.

### Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government should make provision for adequate funds for acquisition of grey literature in University libraries
2. University management should ensure that relevant materials to current curricula and teacher/student interests are supplied in the library
3. University management should embark on regular review and supply of new grey materials the library
4. University management should ensure tight security guards to prevent theft and loss of grey literature
5. University management should create of proper awareness to both teachers and students on the role of grey literature on regular basis
6. Trained university librarians should be employed for effective delivery grey literature services

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