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OpenSIGLE, Home to GreyNet's Research Community and its Grey Literature Collections: Initial Results and a Project Proposal

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Introduction

For the past 16 years, GreyNet has sought to serve researchers and authors in the field of grey literature. To further this end, GreyNet has signed on to the OpenSIGLE repository and in so doing seeks to preserve and make openly available research results originating in the International Conference Series on Grey Literature. GreyNet together with colleagues at INIST-CNRS have designed the format for a metadata record, which encompasses standardized PDF attachments of the authors' conference preprints, PowerPoint presentations, abstracts and biographical notes. In April 2008, the first test batch containing records from the Eighth International Conference on Grey Literature (GL8, 2006) was uploaded. A few minor problems that were encountered and have since been successfully resolved. These metadata records and their corresponding attachments are now available for search and retrieval in OpenSIGLE. Subsequent record entries followed with GL7 (2005) down to GL6 (2004) and GL5 (2003). By December 2008, conference records over the past five years including those from GL9 (2007) will be available in the OpenSIGLE Repository. For this phase of the project, a budget of 2000 Euro was appropriated to cover the costs of formatting, conversion, and technical editing of the 100 plus metadata records and 300 accompanying PDF attachments. Records from the earlier four conferences in the GL Series (1993-1999) will require additional image scanning as well as permission from Emerald (the former MCB University Press). Should this be granted not only would the total number of GreyNet records in OpenSIGLE be nearly doubled but GreyNet's collection would then be comprehensive.

Method of Approach

If OpenSIGLE is indeed the best home for GreyNet, then some measure of empirical results should be able to confirm it. Results that would demonstrate benefits for both the GreyNet Collection as well as OpenSIGLE. For it is here, where the crossroads of more than 25 years of bibliographic information on grey literature intersects with 15 years of research on grey literature. The analysis of usage statistics and local metrics can draw on the standards and definitions of the COUNTER project for journals and databases but must take into account that little has been published so far on usage statistics of documents deposited in open archives, that standards, recommendations and empirical evidence are still missing, and that the software for the export of



statistics need to be improved. Approach, methodology and preliminary usage data will be presented with special attention to comparative data when available from INIST and GreyNet websites, and to the potential and real impact of PR campaigns and referencing on usage. This may also lead to the evaluation of the role and impact of OpenSIGLE and GreyNet's Collection on the development and functioning of the international GreyNet community and the creation of community-related tools and functionality (web 2.0). If GreyNet is to factor into the design of the 'Grey Grid' for information society, then not only it's place in serving researchers and educators in the field of grey literature must be re/evaluated but also it's place in serving practitioners in the field. Such a study would help bring this home.

PART ONE

SIGLE to OpenSIGLE in Five Seconds

SIGLE (System for Information on Grey Literature in Europe) was a unique multidisciplinary database dedicated to grey literature. Up to 15 European partners participated in SIGLE, mostly national libraries or important research libraries. Created in 1980 and produced from 1984 onwards by EAGLE (European Association for Grey Literature Exploitation), the database was last available through STN International and on CD-ROM via Silverplatter/Ovid, until it became dormant in 2005. INIST then decided to make the data publicly available on an open access platform. Details of the migration from SIGLE to OpenSIGLE have been presented at the GL8 Conference held in December 2006 (Schöpfel 2007)¹. The OpenSIGLE website went live in December 2007.

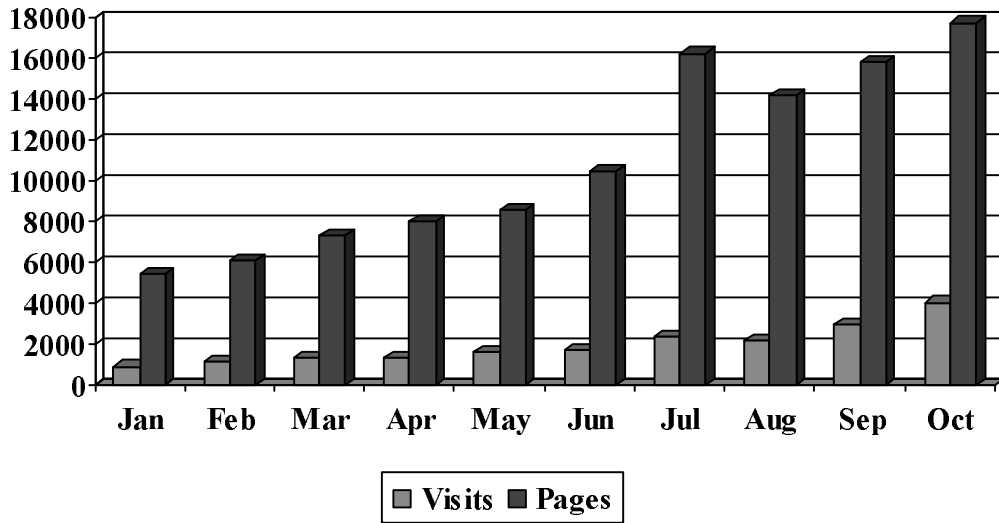
This paper further discusses two aspects of OpenSIGLE: (1) usage statistics covering one year of access to the repository and (2) a cooperative agreement with GreyNet, the Grey Literature Network Service.

OpenSIGLE Traffic Report

Our usage analysis is based on data obtained through *phpMyVisites*, an open source software for website statistics that works with a javascript image call. Only completely uploaded pages are counted and robots are excluded. Other statistics based on server logs might however provide higher numbers. The following data provides only a part of the information that can be obtained through *phpMyVisites*.

The first figure shows that the number of visitors as well as the number of pages have increased steadily since the opening of the website in 2007. The peak in July is due to a press campaign in the middle of the French holidays. The result is both surprising and rewarding since visits usually go down during the summer months.

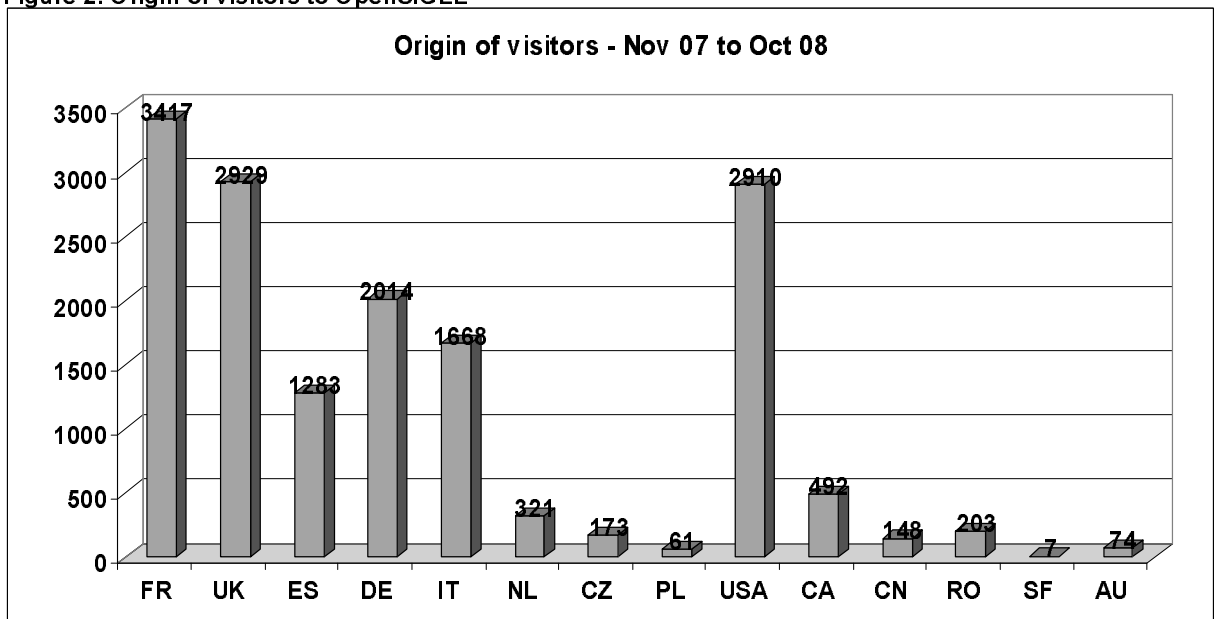
Figure 1: OpenSIGLE 2008 traffic report – number of visits and pages viewed



Geographic Origin of Visitors

Our software allows us to monitor the origin of the visitors for the top ten countries each month. For countries at the end of the list the global number may be higher, but they are not counted if they are in position 11 and below. The sum of 12 months worth of data shows France in the lead, closely followed by the United Kingdom and the United States. A second group is formed by Germany, Italy and Spain. We clearly see that OpenSIGLE users come not only the former EAGLE countries, but also from the United States, Canada, and since recently China. France took the lead from June 2008 onwards, before then UK users were in front.

Figure 2: Origin of visitors to OpenSIGLE



Usage and Feedback

Compared to other INIST websites and e-resources, statistics show that between 16% to 19% of our users are from North America. OpenSIGLE is in third place among users from this continent preceded by the English version of INIST's institutional website (<http://international.inist.fr>) and IndicaSciences - an INIST product dedicated to research evaluation and indicators (<http://indicasciences.inist.fr>). INIST websites geared to a French speaking audience receives about 7% of the visits from North America.

The analysis of web links as well as other feedback reveal that OpenSIGLE is fairly often used in the biomedical and public health sectors. At present, statistics don't allow us to go into further detail regarding scientific domains.

During the course of 2008, we received several requests from former users of the STN or the WebSpirs SIGLE database pertaining to complex search strategies. These requests required us to look into the limits of the Jakarta Lucene search engine implemented with DSpace, especially with regard to the length of the search query. We discovered that Lucene allows more possibilities than mentioned in the help provided by DSpace. Besides inquires involving search strategies, other users were interested in the download and export features of OpenSIGLE.

One critical view of OpenSIGLE found on a blog, slates the absence of links to the full text of documents (<http://healthinformaticist.wordpress.com/2008/08/28/does-opensigle-exist-for-its-own-sake/>). This of course is understandable given the fact that it was one of the very reasons why the SIGLE database was discontinued.

Promotional Activities

Before the official announcement of the launch of OpenSIGLE, we presented the project at a DSpace user group meeting and exchanged experiences with other users (Grésillaud, October 2007)². Shortly afterwards, and as a result of that meeting, we received visitors from Spain and Italy. And in December 2007, attention was also focussed on OpenSIGLE during GL9, the Ninth International Conference on Grey Literature in Antwerp, Belgium.

In May 2008, a short presentation for the French public was given at I-expo (IT conference and exhibit) in Paris. And in July, INIST sent a press release to national and international lists and agencies (i.e. Information World Review and Research Information). This no doubt resulted in the abovementioned peak of visits in the middle of summer. Simultaneously a brief message was placed both on the French and international homepages of INIST. Since "news items" are less frequent during summer months, the message about OpenSIGLE remained for a longer period of time on these WebPages.

Today OpenSIGLE is indexed by Google and Google Scholar and included in the bookmarks of national libraries and research institutes. Following the creation of the WorldWideScience Alliance in June 2008, in which INIST is a partner, we proposed to integrate into the

WorldWideScience portal and this was realized in September 2008. Our web statistics for October show that WWS.org³ is the forth partner site for visitors accessing OpenSIGLE through a website and GreyNet.org⁴ follows closely behind. Overall, these different promotional activities appear to have had a positive impact on the use and branding of OpenSIGLE.

Future Developments

Before discussing further the cooperation between OpenSIGLE and GreyNet, let me conclude this first part of our paper with an outlook to 2009 and beyond.

The work of designing and redesigning Websites is never finished - just as with other information products and services. OpenSIGLE can be further developed in any number of directions. One of which will be the new look planned for 2009. Other directions that we are looking into include:

1. Uploading the French data from 2005 onwards and thus closing the gap between the SIGLE and OpenSIGLE records
2. Integrating links to the full text whenever it exists
3. Inclusion of the Dutch SIGLE records
4. Inclusion of current records from other countries
5. Integrating OpenSIGLE into other networks and portals
6. Etcetera

PART TWO

GreyNet, On the Background and Forefront

In the first part of this paper, we encountered a quarter of a century history and development in warp tempo. In this second part, I would like to address the relationship between GreyNet and the former EAGLE Association including its SIGLE database and then move to a conscious positioning of GreyNet in the newfound OpenSIGLE Repository with INIST as Service Provider. In 1992, EAGLE agreed to act as main sponsor for the launch of the First International Conference on Grey Literature, which was held in the Amsterdam RAI. GreyNet was at that time a newly established network service – driven on two fronts: (1) to promote the field of grey literature and the work of organizations involved in this branch of information the world over, and (2) to stimulate research on grey literature and make the results available both in print and digital (electronic) formats. EAGLE participated as sponsor and/or program committee member in the first five Conferences in the GL-Series.

In early 2005 GreyNet was invited as an observer to the final EAGLE Board meeting at FIZ Karlsruhe, where the Association formally voted to be dissolved. It was at that same meeting that the initial draft of an OpenSIGLE proposal was presented by Dr. Joachim Schöpfel⁵, who was the last in line of EAGLE Presidents.

In the two ensuing years (2005-2007), INIST worked unilaterally on OpenSIGLE, which could then be described as a caretaker repository. In the autumn of 2007, once OpenSIGLE had become operational, GreyNet met with colleagues at INIST to hammer out an agreement that on the one hand would make GreyNet OAI-compliant and on the other hand would expand INIST's role in OpenSIGLE from solely a caretaker to an external service provider. And, GreyNet's conference based collections would provide an example of OpenSIGLE's potential for other data providers in the grey literature community.

The GreyNet Community in 2008

As of December 2008, the last five years of research issuing from the GL Conference Series has been uploaded in the OpenSIGLE Repository. The bilateral contact between INIST as service provider and GreyNet as data provider was successful in customizing a metadata record for the enriched publication of conference preprints and the subsequent migration of GreyNet's collections to an open access environment. The bilateral agreement likewise holds for future conferences in the GL-Series, continuing with GL10 records onward. Retrospective input of the initial four conferences in the GL-Series (1993-1999) would however make GreyNet's collections comprehensive in OpenSIGLE. And to this end, contact has been undertaken with the Emerald Group Publishing Limited – the former MCB University Press – which still holds copyright on this material.

The initial reaction from the grey literature community to GreyNet's alliance with OpenSIGLE has been positive, however due to the brief timeframe in which GreyNet's collections are actually available in the OpenSIGLE Repository, it yet too early to provide you with any substantial user statistics. While GreyNet has been receiving monthly reports from INIST generated via OpenSIGLE, GreyNet is looking at ways to compile use and user statistics as well as other feedback via its own channels. In this way, early down the road, there would be separate data issuing from INIST as service provider and GreyNet as data provider, which might allow us to draw comparisons and provide grounds for decisions in the future. In September of this year, an OpenSIGLE webpage was added to the GreyNet website with hyperlinks to its conference collections. From September to November visits to this webpage have been a little over hundred per month; however, now that GreyNet's current collections are all available in OpenSIGLE, what was a sub-page on the GreyNet website will in January 2009 become a main page - visible and clickable from GreyNet's homepage. This will no doubt create more traffic to the OpenSIGLE Repository; and at the same time allow for the addition of its own sub-pages for content, promotional, and instructive purposes.

GreyNet's Potential for OpenSIGLE

The Grey Literature Network Service feels that it has still more to offer OpenSIGLE than its collections of conference-based research. Going back to 1992, when GreyNet was first launched, one of its primary goals mentioned earlier in this paper was to promote the field of grey literature and the work of organizations involved in this branch of information. To this end - what EAGLE was to SIGLE, GreyNet could be to OpenSIGLE and more. GreyNet operates internationally and maintains a full-time established network service specializing in grey literature with information products and resources both in print and electronic formats. GreyNet has for the past six years (2003-2008) often times together with colleagues from France and The Netherlands carried out research projects involving citation analysis, questionnaires and surveys, interviews, as well as standard review of literature.

GreyNet has incorporated its own results from these small-scale projects with the results from research carried out by other of the 250 authors/researchers in the GL-Conference Series in order to develop an academic curriculum for students of Library and Information Science (LIS). This course curriculum was first offered for 3 hours of college credit via the distance education program at the University of New Orleans (UNO) in the Fall 2007 semester⁶. After an evaluation and revisions, it will once again be offered in the Spring 2009 semester. GreyNet seeks to expose other LIS Colleges and Schools to curriculum opportunities in grey literature. And, at this very conference we have ten masters students from the University of Amsterdam, who will be using results from the GL10 published research in the completion of their own assignments linked to course credit.

Over the past 16 years (1992-2008), GreyNet has developed channels for promotional outreach as well as a publishing arm. These could no doubt serve and support future developments in the OpenSIGLE Repository.

Further Considerations and Concluding Remarks

Over the past year, in the course of migrating GreyNet's collections to the OpenSIGLE Repository, a number of issues arose and give way to serious consideration, such as:

- Streamlining the SIGLE Classification Scheme for the OpenSIGLE Repository
- Customizing metadata templates for various grey literature document types
- Plus links to datasets and software underlying the results of published research
- Networking with former EAGLE members and new stakeholders in Grey Literature
- Proving a crosswalk to subject based and institutional grey literature resources and collections
- Etcetera

What began unilaterally with the vision and determination of INIST-CNRS and what has recently been expanded in bilateral cooperation with GreyNet has yet even greater potential for the global grey literature community. GreyNet together with INIST-CNRS are committed to drafting a project proposal. This proposal will explore the capacity required for the OpenSIGLE Repository to further develop in multi-lateral and international cooperation in the support of European research infrastructures committed to open access of their grey literature collections and resources.

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³ WorldWideScience.org, the global science gateway <http://worldwidescience.org/>

⁴ GreyNet, Grey Literature Network Service <http://www.greynet.org/>

⁵ Schöpfel, J. (2006), MetaGrey Europe, A Proposal in the Aftermath of EAGLE-SIGLE. – In: GL7 Conference Proceedings, pp. 34-39. – ISBN 90-77484-06-X

⁶ Farace, D.J., J. Frantzen, J. Schöpfel and C. Stock (2008), Grey Literature: A Pilot Course constructed and implemented via Distance Education. – In: The Grey Journal: An International journal on Grey Literature, vol. 4, no 1, Spring 2008. - ISSN 1574-1796