



# Grey Literature & Information Ethics: Shared Concerns and Cognitive Dissonance in the Digital Information Economy

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## Abstract

Applied information ethics is concerned with information-based decision-making and its impact on an organization's fundamental moral compass, policy, strategy and success. Preliminary analyses of the landscapes in Grey Literature (GL) and Information Ethics (IE) suggest significant shared areas of concern in our professional practice. Building on dialogue at GreyForum 1.1 (Oxford 2013, InfoEthics UK/GreyNet), we suggest that the application of new technologies creates both opportunities and risks, including: standards in digital preservation, content convergence, marginalization of traditional professional practice, emerging professional roles and a reluctance to engage with education, training and rigorous discourse.

Librarianship, publishing, cultural heritage, information, KM, records and archives management are converging. Each is confronting new horizons and challenges, yet are at risk of irreparable harm. We present an innovative, user-centred approach to reducing these risks delivering reflective training across the spectrum of the information community. Our database and case study corpus is growing and timely. We welcome expressions of interest to collaborate in developing an online learning platform relevant for the digital information economy.

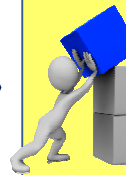
## Shared concerns or cognitive dissonance?



- Publishing, librarianship, records, archives, information management and cultural heritage are at risk of irreparable harm
- Grey Literature and Information Ethics: central to information world
- Accelerating new technologies: ethical judgment lags behind
- Fast-changing ICTs: greater need to capture & explore ethical dilemmas
- Grey literature: emerging textual & non-textual formats
- Are we marginalized by globalization & new ways of working?
- How do we confront uncomfortable issues?



## Call for dialogue and action!



- Ongoing escalating risks need challenging
- Applied information ethics: reflective training needed now more than ever
- Need for dialogue within the information professions
- Join us to develop the tools
- Disseminate training for global information community

Respond to our invitation for partnership below



## Cognitive dissonance?

### Grey Literature and Information Ethics: Themes of mutual concern

Collaborative professional activity generates opportunities for research:

- o Rigorous debate and analysis of perspectives
- o Sensitizing and engaging traditional and emergent information professionals
- o Avoiding reluctance to connect with these issues
- o Adaptability to change for information professions
- o Pathways to professional responsibility



The mental stress or discomfort experienced by an individual who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values at the same time, or is confronted by new information that conflicts with existing beliefs, ideas, or values.

*Leon Festinger*

## Shared concerns: tip of the iceberg?

- Are **digitally preserved** materials truly preserved?
- Are we witnessing a paradigm shift in information tools? Is there a '**Google generation**'?
- Are we equipped to challenge or even understand the questions of **open access**?
- How do we manage the increased risk of suboptimal **standards or validation**?
- How do we resolve the inherent weaknesses in informal (e.g. open) **peer review**?
- Can we avoid the influence of self-interest in **citations**?
- How do we protect the rights of individuals at the same time as enabling valuable **open access**?
- Are **new technologies** always a better thing if **risk of loss** is increased?
- Is our **professionalism** compromised through use of surveys, ethnographers, etc?
- Blurred distinction between the **user & provider** of information services. Can we collectively resolve these common concerns?
- Can or should **dissemination** of information be improved (access, cost, equitability)?
- How do we ensure the validity (objectivity) of **metadata standards**?
- Do educators or practitioners provide the best **case studies** from which to learn?

## Invitation to collaborate

We invite expressions of interest to develop learning tools in applied information ethics. As new waves of textual and non-textual grey literature emerge, partner with us to deliver online training in the digital information economy:



- Thought leaders
- Policy makers
- Practitioners
- Academic researchers
- Learning & Development specialists
- Digital Publishers
- Database developers



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**InfoEthics UK**  
eliminate ethical risk

## About InfoEthics UK

- Training, workshops and consultancy for information professionals
- Innovative, interactive training and audit: mapping information risk
- Global: collaboration with industry experts and professional bodies in information & KM communities
- Established in 2006
- Located in London, Oxford & Amsterdam
- Multi-cultural: working knowledge of English, Russian, French, Dutch, German, Hungarian & Hebrew

## Information Audit Toolkit

Our holistic approach combines audit of an organization's information landscape with analysis of ethical concerns.

