Grey literature in library and information science education:
A profile of faculty, students and courses in North American LIS departments
A *Scholarly communication perspective*

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Rationale

Realistically

- Most frequently, librarians that assume responsibility for various areas of scholarly communication in the library are collection developers, librarians involved with serial management, copyright specialists or a combination of such roles. The Association for Research Libraries ***Scholarly Communication Education Initiatives*, SPEC Kit 299** indicated that in most libraries scholarly communications is not the major role of the librarian.

Strategically

- While serials librarians and collection developers are likely to assume responsibilities for managing grey literature, courses that offer training in these areas are few. Data collected by the SERALST about serials courses taken in library school indicate that 75% of individuals who identify as serials librarians responded that they were never offered a course devoted solely to serials during library school.

Inquisitively

- One may therefore conclude that these librarians are getting their serials knowledge in other courses. What might those be and what are they learning there about grey literature, is the question of this study.
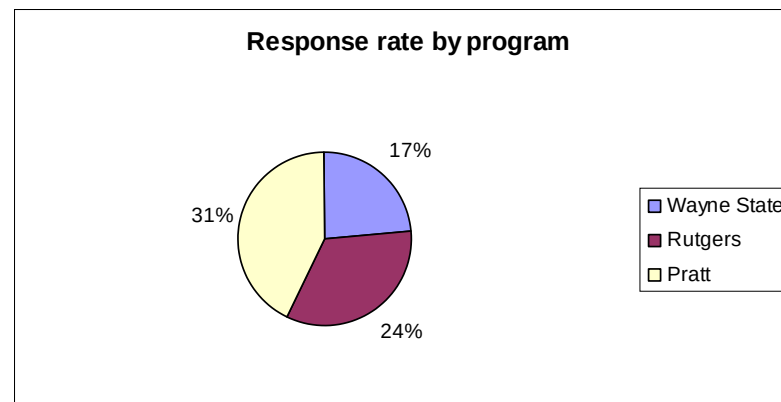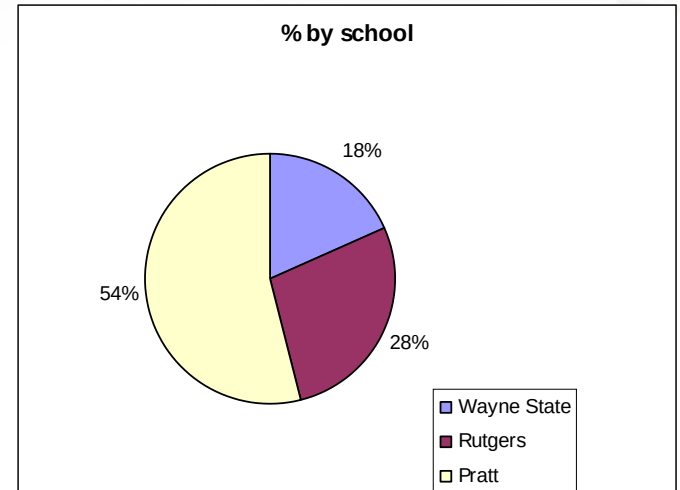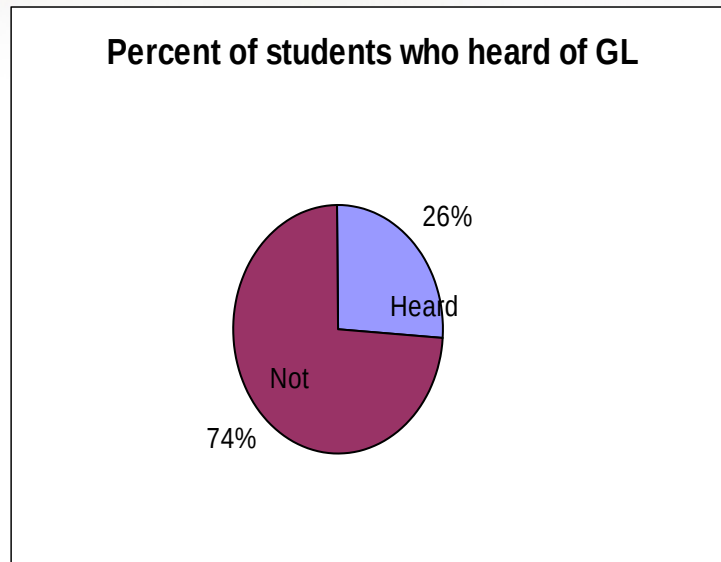
Methodology and data collection

Purpose of study: exploratory
- Survey [online questionnaire] – best method for collecting data from a relatively large and geographically disperse population.
- First population: Library and information science master's students in 3 LIS programs in the United States
- Second population: Syllabi from LIS programs in the United States
- Third population: focus group interview with graduate students and personal interview with LIS faculty

Details
- Nearly 300 LIS students at Wayne State University, Rutgers University, Pratt Institute, selected as representing programs with differing perspectives on LIS education
- Main instrument, survey, conducted during Oct. 2007, with earlier pilot study in June 2007.
- Survey was identical in questions but customized to each program's particulars.

Findings: Have you ever heard the term Grey Literature? (online questionnaire results)

Percent of students who heard of GL

26% Heard
74% Not

% by school

18%
28%
54%

- Wayne State
- Rutgers
- Pratt

Response rate by program

17%
24%
31%

- Wayne State
- Rutgers
- Pratt

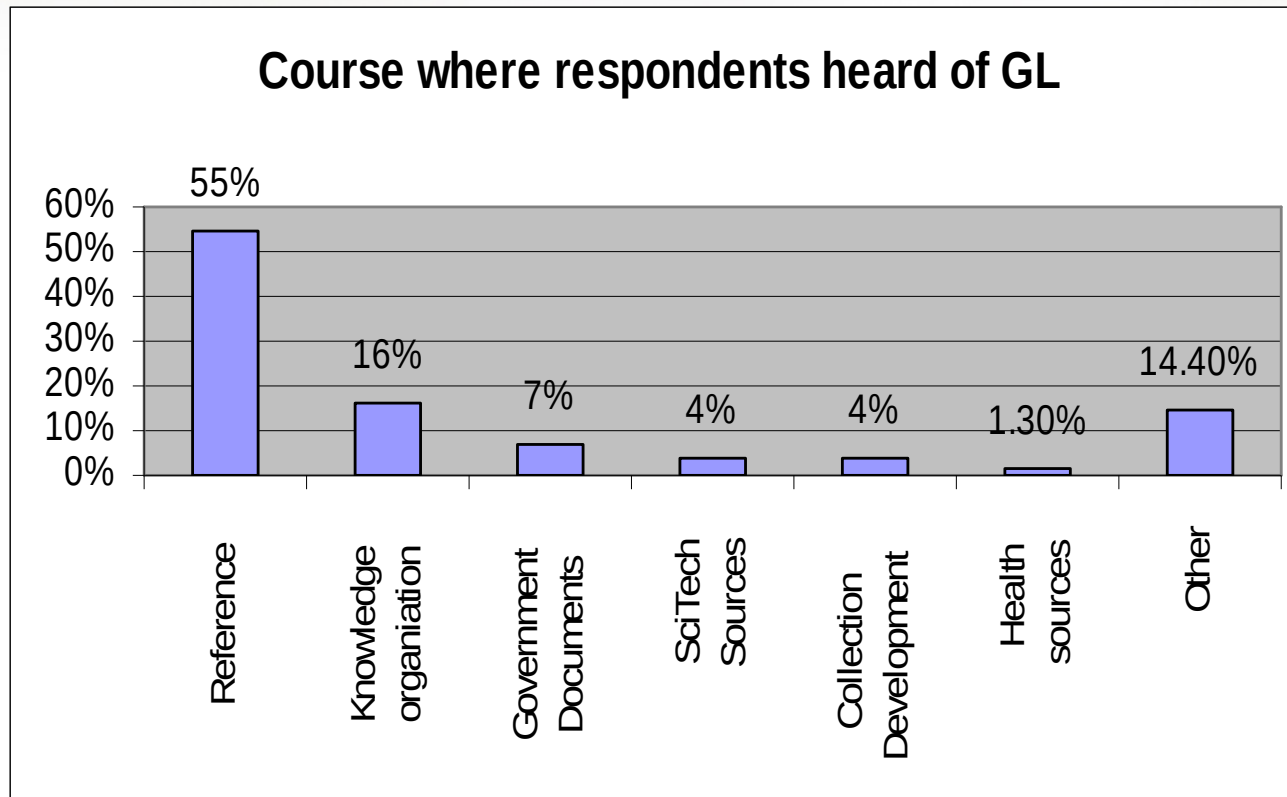# Finding: Have you heard of Grey Literature (Focus group results)

Student responses

- I've heard of the issues it describes but I think I heard other terms used for it.
- I only heard it because of your class
- I came across the term in one of the listserv I subscribe to but never bothered to find out what it means

What do you think it means?

- Everyplace I read about it says something different
- It's very confusing
- I understand reports and dissertation and conference proceedings, but are blogs and e-mails also grey literature?
- Why is it spelled with an E?
- It sounds like what Prof. X described as ephemeral sources
- I didn't even register that's an English spelling, it seemed normal to me.
- When I heard the terms for the first time, I thought it was literature for retired people

Findings: Did you hear about GL in any of your courses?

Course where respondents heard of GL

Course	Percentage
Reference	55%
Knowledge organiation	16%
Government Documents	7%
SciTech Sources	4%
Collection Development	4%
Health sources	1.30%
Other	14.40%

Finding: Did you hear about GL in any of your courses?

Student responses
- I think its one of those phrases that gets mentioned in a lot of courses but never explained
- I heard about it in reference
- Reference. Reference. Yeah, reference
- I think it was in the 652 [reference] textbook (*it wasn't*)
- Maybe it was called something else
- Never heard of it before.
- Nope, never, I don't think so.
- I am graduating in Dec. and if I hadn't joined this group I would never have heard of it.
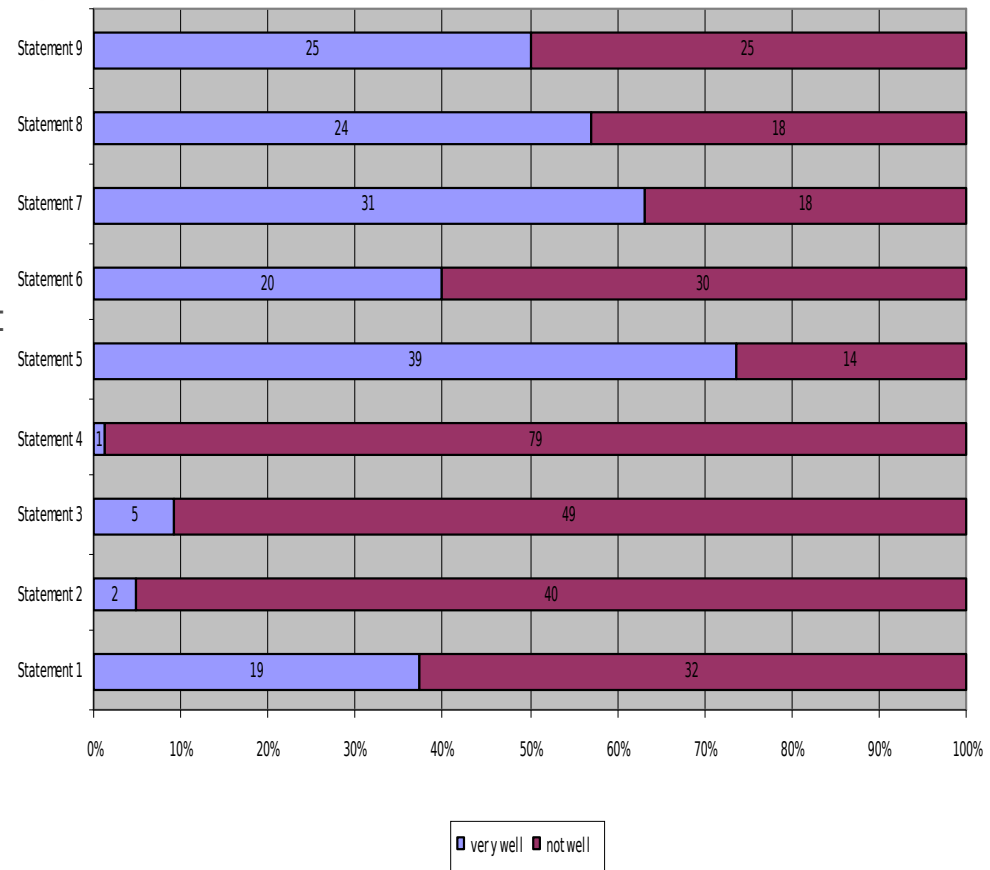
Where do you think it best fits in the curriculum?
- Knowledge organization
- Collection development
- It fits in many places but it matters most to people who will do ILL
- Or to catalogers
- It matters least to reference but most of us know it from reference

How well do the following statements describe Grey Literature

- 9ine: GL describes materials not picked up by commercial search engines (such as Google and Yahoo)
- 8ight: GL describes materials not available in OPACs
- 7even: GL describes materials published by non-commercial publishers
- 6ix: GL is government information that is not available in the Catalog of Government Publications
- 5ive: GL are materials not indexed by commercial indexers
- 4our: GL refers to materials stored in dark archives that are intended for long term preservation
- 3hree: GL refers to materials guarded by institutional gatekeepers who deny access to them
- 2wo: GL is similar to open access journals
- 1ne: GL describes materials of unknown origin (where the author or publisher can't be identified)

Statement	very well	not well
Statement 9	25	25
Statement 8	24	18
Statement 7	31	18
Statement 6	20	30
Statement 5	39	14
Statement 4	1	79
Statement 3	5	49
Statement 2	2	40
Statement 1	19	32

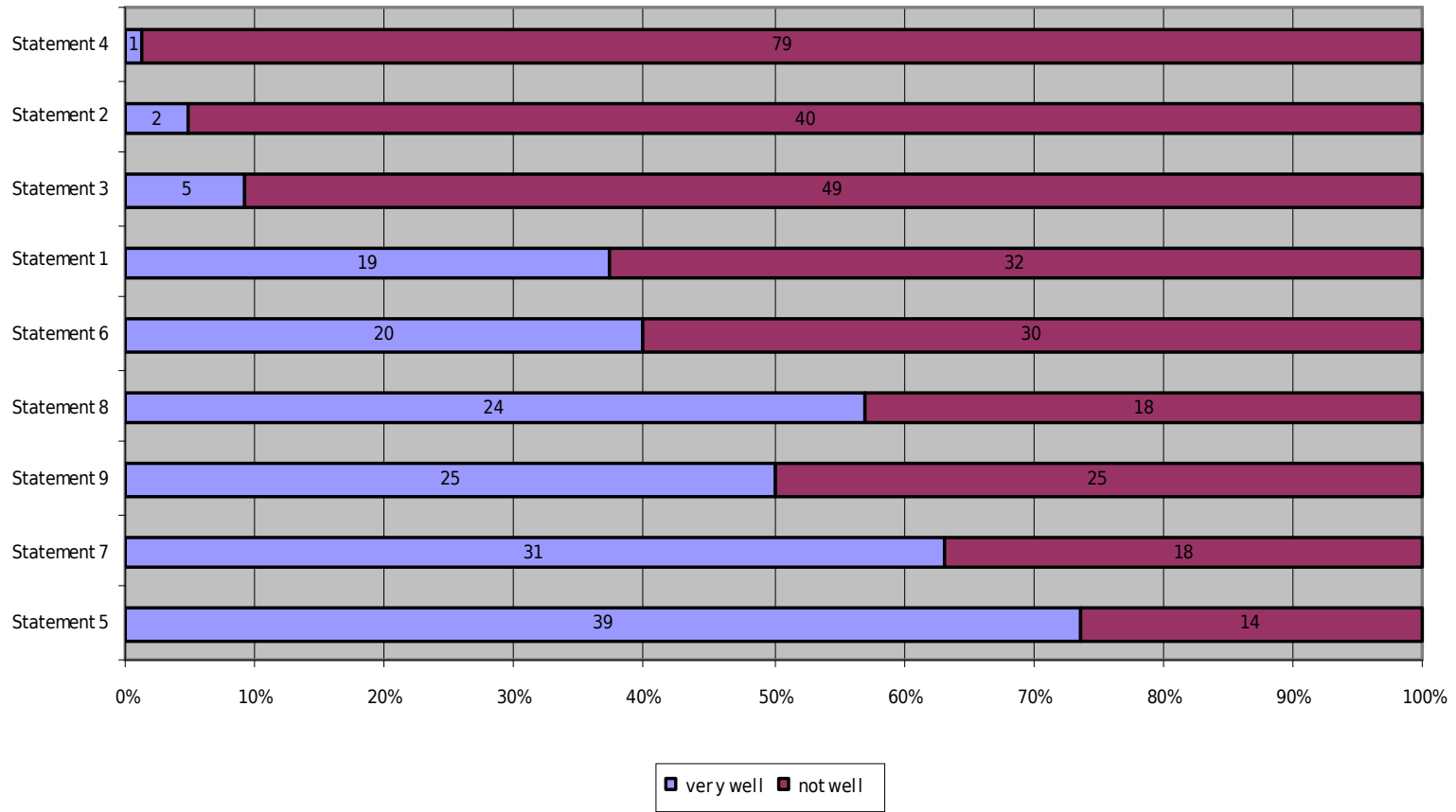0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

▪ very well ▪ not well

Very well:
   GL are materials not indexed by commercial indexers
   GL describes materials published by non-commercial publishers
Not well:
   GL refers to materials stored in dark archives that are intended for long term preservation
   GL is similar to open access journals

Statement	very well	not well
Statement 4	1	79
Statement 2	2	40
Statement 3	5	49
Statement 1	19	32
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Statement 9	25	25
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□ very well ■ not well

Statistical significance

Statistically significant difference between *very well* and *Not well* were found for the following statements

- 1ne: GL describes materials of unknown origin (where the author or publisher can't be identified
- 4our: GL refers to materials stored in dark archives that are intended for long term preservation
- 5ive: GL are materials not indexed by commercial indexers
- 7even: GL describes materials published by non-commercial publishers
- 8ight: GL describes materials not available in OPACs

Other findings

- Incoming students (Fall 2007) are less likely to have heard of GL
- Course listing had no discernable impact on hearing of or identifying GL
- Difference between LIS program occurred only with regard to Statement 2
- The students who answered YES to hearing about GL, identified the more accurate description statements at a statistically significant higher rate.

Is GL treated in LIS syllabi?

- Dedicated
  - New Orleans
- Reference
  - Louisiana Knowledge Organization
- Records management
- Health sources
  - Texas A&M
  - Chapel Hill
- SciTech
  - Clarion
  - University of Texas
- Collection development
  - Kentucky
  - Simmons
  - Hawaii

Recommendations and Further research

Limitations
Online questionnaire and self reporting
Barriers from systematically review course syllabi (LMS)
Difficulty in coding data

Further research
Problem: integrating grey literature in the curriculum
Creating a research agenda for grey lit
Researching faculty

Questions?

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