Grey Literature

Tips for Selecting Sources to Include
August 12, 2015
“Getting Everything” is a Myth

Grey literature encompasses a wide array of information in a multitude of formats. It is simply not possible to search and locate everything in a given area because grey literature is not organized in a logical manner.

The best thing you can do is define your scope and set your limits from the start.
Who are you producing information for?

- Decision-makers and/or administration
- Academic and research community
- Professional colleagues
- Patients

Knowing who will be using the product of your efforts in the end can assist you in defining what grey literature sources need to be included.
What kind of grey lit will you collect?

- Abstracts and/or conference proceedings
- Reports
- Hospital policies
- Clinical trials

Define the types of information you will search for. This will allow you to narrow your list of places to look and employ publication type limits in sources searched.
Places to Find Relevant Organizations to Search

- Health Hotlines - Find Organizations
  - National Library of Medicine

- Health Organizations by Topic
  - MedlinePlus

- Top 100 Canadian Health Websites
  - HLWIKI International

- Grey Literature Publishers List
  - The New York Academy of Medicine
Find Sources in Relevant Subject Guides

Search other library guides in your subject area to see if they have created a grey literature resource list.
Find Resources in Other Relevant Publications

Try searching PubMed for “grey literature AND [your subject/topic]”
Literature searches

Structured searches were conducted in the following 12 subscription databases: Web of Knowledge, Medline, ZETOC, CINAHL, ASSIA, Social Services Abstracts, British Humanities Index, PsycArticles, AMED, Proquest Nursing and Allied Health Source, IBSS, Sociological Abstracts.

The following search strategy was used between August 2011 and November 2011:

- ab,tI(roma or romany or romany or gipsy or gypsies or gypsy or gypsies or traveler or traveller or travelers or travellers or ‘travelling community’ or ‘travelling communities’ or ‘traveling community’ or ‘traveling communities’) and (health or outreach).

Searches were also conducted by two reviewers in Cochrane, Campbell, CRD/DARE and EPI-Centre databases. A number of strategies were undertaken to retrieve grey literature, including searches of the FADE grey literature library for health and social care, open access resources (Directory of Open Access Journals, UK Higher Education Repositories, BioMed Central Open Access, UK theses) and contacting key representatives working with Traveller Communities.