

Awareness not Genre Matters: A Case Study of the Scientific Grey Literature of an Intergovernmental Organization

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Abstract

This research investigates the use and influence of information produced as grey literature by the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment (GOMC). Interviews with Members of GOMC's primary Working Group revealed that publishing in the grey genre is not a matter of concern when promoting awareness of the publications. Results from interviews are enhancing our understanding of the production, diffusion, and use of the Council's information in scientific and public sector settings.

Introduction

- Marine ecosystems globally are at great risk due to human pressures.
- Much of the key scientific information for finding solutions is in grey literature, an increasingly important knowledge base.
- This information informs timely and effective policy-making.
- Understanding information production, distribution and use will enable evaluation of its influence, and identification of the information-policy interface.

Guiding Questions

- What has GOMC published, where and how?
- What is the evidence of distribution and use of their publications?
- What are the information pathways in intergovernmental and governmental organizations?
- How can marine environmental information in grey formats be influential in decision making?

Methods

- Our methods have included:*
- Creation of databases of the Council's publications and citations.
 - Analysis of citations.
 - Interviews of primary Working Group members to determine information pathways.
 - Content analysis of publications for characteristics that promote distribution and awareness.

Implications for Grey Literature

- Efficient access and effective use of information is critical to solving environmental issues.
- Relying solely on digital distribution does not guarantee effective dissemination in spite of increasing information technologies.
- Publishing in the grey genre is not a matter of concern in promoting awareness of publications.
- Insight into linkages between science and policy require further research.

Guiding Framework and Some Key Results

The study was guided by an initial framework (Figure 2) and was revised based on results (Figure 3).

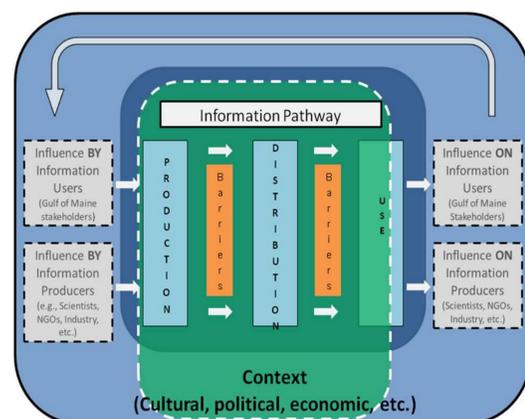


Figure 1: Guiding framework

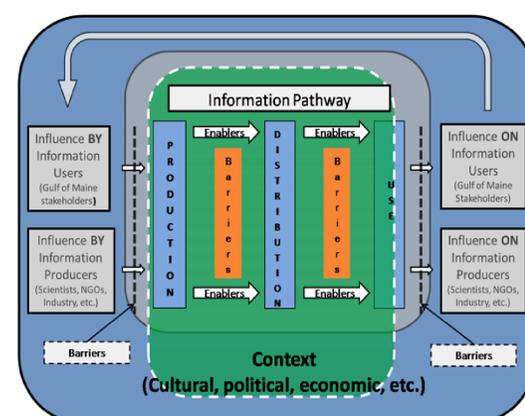


Figure 2: Revised Guiding Framework

Production	Distribution	Use
<p>Publications are peer reviewed but publication practices vary.</p> <p>Steps in the Production Process</p>	<p>An informal process exists for the region.</p> <p><i>Distribution types identified by interviews:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General access: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GOMC Web site and libraries GOMC meetings or conferences In response to users: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emailing or forwarding a publication Personal delivery of a document Talking about information Using the postal system (mail) Relevant personnel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GOMC Councilors; Producing Committee; Secretariat; Working Groups Agencies within each jurisdiction (print copies only) Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal and external advertising Serendipity 	<p>Use and influence of information is not yet fully evaluated.</p> <p><i>Types of use identified by interviewees:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic use at regional universities Research and work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By GOMC affiliated agencies of the publishing authors or committees By industry, government and non governmental agencies In legislation (e.g., Restoration Protocols) General public and colleagues outside of GOMC Cited by other reports
<p>Fragmented Process</p> <p><i>"...there's a review process that currently is hard to figure out...it's a very erratic process at the moment..."</i></p> <p>Working Group Member Q</p>	<p>Highly personalized methods</p> <p><i>"...there are times when we don't necessarily distribute a physical report but we're constantly brokering the information that's inside that report..."</i></p> <p>Working Group Member G</p>	<p>Evidence of use, but not influence</p> <p><i>"...we have that handout on American Eel... I gave that to our pelagics advisor... he found it very informative ...he never told me how [he] recommended to the minister what our position is..."</i></p> <p>Working Group Member K</p>

Figure 3: Elucidation of GOMC Information Flow

Next Steps

Our future research includes:

- Continuing analyses to determine the use of grey literature.
- Developing methods for evaluating the influence of grey literature on decision making in environmental fields.
- Adding case studies to include other governmental and intergovernmental bodies
- Partnering with other environmental and resource research groups to increase the interdisciplinary nature of the project.

Theses/Publications

Papers and theses arising from the research are being published:

Cossarini, D.M. (2010). *Marine environmental grey literature: A case study*. (Unpublished MLIS thesis). Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada.

MacDonald, B.H., Wells, P.G., Cordes, R.E., Hutton, G.R.G., Cossarini, D.M., & Soomai, S.S. (2010). The use and influence of information produced as grey literature by international, intergovernmental marine organizations: Overview of current research. In D.J. Farace & J. Schöpfel. (Eds.) *Grey literature in library and information studies*. Berlin: De Gruyter Saur.

Soomai, S.S., Wells, P.G., & MacDonald, B.H. (2011). Multi-stakeholder perspectives on the use and influence of "grey" scientific information in fisheries management. *Marine Policy*, 35(1), 50-62. doi:10.1016/j.marpol.2010.07.006

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