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GREY LITERATURE AT MENDEL UNIVERSITY IN BRNO

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Abstract

The paper summarizes the experience of a university library which has not started building institutional repository and which lacks conceptual treatment of work with grey literature. The MENDELU Library deals primarily with university final theses which are after their defense submitted to the library in printed copies and made further available in electronic forms within the University Information System. In addition, the paper focuses on current cooperation between MENDELU and NRGL (National Repository of Grey Literature) and our experience with data preparation for harvesting through the OAI-PMH protocol.

Keywords

Grey literature, archival materials, university final theses, MENDELU in Brno

Types of grey literature at MENDELU

For scientific purposes it is desirable to use grey literature alongside the traditionally published sources as this type of literature brings the latest findings in the given field and carries valuable data and information. Due to the development of modern information technologies, grey literature is nowadays more easily accessible than other conventionally published types of documents, access to which has to be paid by the user in the form of subscription or by purchasing the book. The increasing need of access for not just the scientists to the grey literature collections leads in a number of institutions to a coordinated harvesting. As the librarians, we are aware of this fact and need. Unfortunately, the work with grey literature is currently not conceptually treated at Mendel University and there is no coordinated harvesting of publications in terms of building an institutional repository as the platform for saving, storing, sharing and presenting university published outputs. Fortunately, the situation is starting to change towards the position that university repository represents an opportunity to make publication activity more visible; it further contributes to faster mutual communication within scientific communities and to the higher credit of the whole university.

1. Before commencing the cooperation with the National Repository of Grey Literature, we had to find out what types of grey literature are produced at the university and about which we have information to be further submitted. If we assume that grey literature

represents documents which are not published in a traditional way and thus are not accessible on the common book market¹, we can consider some archival materials along with university final theses as grey literature at MENDELU. We take as archival materials such documents (in this case, the producer of all organizational files at Mendel University) which have been selected in terms of their date of origin, content, origin, and permanent value for permanent storage and included in the archival records.² In accordance with the university internal regulation³, the university archive selects, scientifically processes, archives and records the MENDELU archival materials.

2. These are:

3. organizational regulations and statutes of University of Agriculture in Brno, Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry, university farms, long-term objectives, forecasts and plans, annual reports, financial reports
4. final reports (e.g. of research tasks), research reports
5. patents and licenses
6. arboretum site plans
7. some documents from personal fonds of professors, unpublished memories and memoirs, manuscripts, correspondence
8. comparative experiments
9. supporting teaching materials – lectures and class preparations, lesson plans, study guidelines
10. conference proceedings, if not published
11. travel reports, student mobility reports
12. student magazines
13. as well as a poetry collection by President Emeritus, Prof. Vyskot, study of the ecological transformation of Vodni mlyny 1986-1992, unpublished Atlas of Seeds
14. The above-mentioned types of documents are considered as archival materials at MENDELU, they are professionally processed and recorded in accordance with the Archival and Records Management Act and made accessible within the national records

¹ Czech Explanatory Terminology Database Library and Information Science

² Archival and Records Management Act

³ Filing and discard regulation

of Archive Fonds and Collections in the Czech Republic. Although there is an internal university regulation and a record and discard plan, there are no sanctions defined, and submitting these documents depends on the will of the document producers or university organizational units.

15. University Final Theses

16. This is the most common and typical type of grey literature at MENDELU. The procedure for the creation and archival is as follows. A student is required to submit his thesis assignment into the University Information System (hereinafter referred to as UIS) and within a given period also the full text of the work; in addition, the student submits the thesis in the printed form to the Study Department. The electronic form of the work is accessible in the UIS including the reports by the supervisor and opponent as well as the information whether the thesis was defended successfully. The physical copy of the defended work is forwarded by the Faculty Study Department to the library along with the list of works just generated from the UIS. The library completes the list with description requirements according to the cataloguing principles and attaches adjustment features to the work. The completed file is imported to the library system. During the import, the url of the full text is completed in the MARC field in the UIS. However, the responsibility that the physical form of the work, especially its title page, and data in the UIS correspond, is not addressed. We cannot rely on the assumption that the data in the export from the UIS (list of defended theses) is identical with the physical form of the thesis. Neither does the system check mistakes such as full stops in the title or entered incorrect language of the final thesis. This finding was very unpleasant for the library and thus, prior to the import of metadata from the UIS to the library system, a thorough checking of the metadata accuracy of final theses is carried out with a “book-in-hand” to make sure they were identical with their printed counterparts. The physical form of the thesis is available to our users in the facilities for on-site studying; it is then forwarded to the circulation department stock where it can be made available in the study spaces upon request. The last place of archiving is the university archive. The final theses are considered to be inseparable parts of the documentation on passing the final exam and therefore they are further treated and archived as archival materials. In case of transition, the bibliographical record in the catalogue remains the same, only the location changes, the user is able to find the information on the current location of the thesis. Not all the electronic forms of theses are presented in full text. The theses that are not publically accessible are those related to the assessment of economic indicators of individual companies. The final decision rests upon the thesis supervisor; currently there is no internal regulation which would clearly delimit the conditions that must be observed in order to mark the thesis as possibly non-publishable.

17. Cooperation with the National Repository of Grey Literature

18. In 2010, Mendel University started discussions on the cooperation with the National Repository of Grey Literature. Out of the possible ways of cooperation, the storage of the metadata of MENDELU final theses in NRGL was selected, by means of harvesting

bibliographical records from the library system KPWinSQL. Near the NRGL record, one can find information indicating that the thesis full text is accessible to registered users for on-site studying in the MENDELU library and a link to full text theses in the UIS is not part of the OAI set. The reason for this is based on the fact that the university does not conclude any License agreement with the authors, nor does it require any consent by the author to make the thesis available. The university proceeds in compliance with the Art. 47b, par. 3 of the Higher Education Act, according to which the author agrees with the publication of the thesis by its submitting, regardless the defense results. Currently, a new internal directive is being prepared which will incorporate elements of both acts – Higher Education Act and Copyright Act and will open the door to full text theses via NRGL.

19. Within the technical preparation, the library purchased the OAI-PMH provider and the preparation of records for harvesting started, which proved to be more complicated than we had originally expected. Over the course of years since the university was founded, various documents under various titles, sometimes in singular, other times in plural form, have been filed within the fond, which is nowadays called university final theses, and this practice has been going on until the time of the “great cleanup” before harvesting. For example, dissertation as well as “dizertation” thesis, final thesis, final report. We have agreed on the works and year since when to start harvesting, we have unified the marking for the typology of the NRGL documents as well as the content of fields in our catalogue. It can be said that due to the preparation for harvesting of our records into NRGL, we have corrected errors in our own catalogue.
20. Eventually, 4,950 Bachelor Theses, 3,736 Diploma Theses, 1,190 Dissertation Theses, and 240 Habilitation Theses have been prepared for harvesting. These are theses defended at Mendel University in Brno, which included the information on the type of work in the MARC fields in our library system. This way we can retain the typology of the NRGL documents. For older theses this data was not entered when re-cataloguing and it is beyond our power to trace it back.
21. The first attempt at harvesting was not successful, the connection was slow, the error was on the side of our provider. In the next phase, the harvesting was thus carried out in several waves and was successful. In February of this year, one of the colleagues from NRGL informed us that the testing of OAI MENDELU was successfully completed and an item for Mendel University was created in the CDS Invenio system and the bibliographical records of university final theses were displayed.
22. In the summer of this year, we changed the library system, we started using Verbis from KP Sys. After testing the compatibility of the system with the OAI PMH protocol, we plan to prepare metadata of other university final theses to be harvested.
23. Why does MENDELU cooperate with NRGL? The university is not connected to the Theses.cz system, therefore, the main reason is the fact that the information on the defended final theses will be displayed on a platform that primarily focuses on harvesting grey literature, is part of international repositories and provides intuitive and user-friendly environment for searching.