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## ETDs, Scholarly Communication, and Campus Collaboration

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# ETDs, scholarly communication, and campus collaboration

## Opportunities for libraries

**E**lectronic submission, storage, and dissemination of student theses and dissertations are growing more common in universities and colleges. For many libraries, ETDs (Electronic Theses and Dissertations) are the first targets for an institutional repository program, and represent an opportunity to engage graduate students and their faculty advisors in broader conversation about open access, intellectual property management, long-term management of digital content, and other scholarly communication issues.

ETD programs offer several potential benefits to students and institutions alike, including increased expressiveness and savings in cost and time. From the perspective of college and graduate school deans, however, the migration to ETDs raises several important issues. Foremost among them are concerns for preservation of the process of reviewing students' thesis work and maintenance of the thesis as an integral part of the student record. The growth in ETD programs represents a cultural change in the practice of thesis deposit extending well beyond formatting issues. Graduate schools will continue to work collaboratively with thesis committees to ensure the academic integrity of work and to prevent the premature release of proprietary information. Moreover, graduate deans also want to preserve their role as custodians of student records, ensuring through campus electronic archival and records policies that submitted ETDs are retained in partial fulfillment of degree requirements. We encourage college and university librarians to recognize these

issues as opportunities for engagement and dialogue with their academic administration on issues that are central to scholarly communication.

Institutions planning ETD programs should expect to address the role of UMI Dissertation Publishing (a division of ProQuest) in its overall thesis/dissertation program, the concerns of some disciplines over the potential effect of open access to dissertations on future publication of the work, and questions about the preservation of multimedia files. This also means that institutions may want to work with students to review the essential ingredients of the students' contracts with UMI to ensure protection of their work and, where patentable materials are included, the legal rights of patent holders.

### Potential benefits for students and universities

- *Expressiveness.* ETDs can incorporate a wider range of media than printed dissertations, allowing students to express their interpretations and research findings through color imagery, audio, video, and interactive media.

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Contact Joyce L. Ogburn—series editor, cochair of the ACRL Scholarly Communications Committee, and university librarian at the University of Utah—with article ideas, e-mail: [joyce.ogburn@utah.edu](mailto:joyce.ogburn@utah.edu)

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- **Visibility.** ETDs increase the visibility of students and their advisors, potentially leading to improved job prospects or graduate school placement for students and better recruitment for colleges and universities.

- **Operational efficiency.** Theses and dissertations typically begin life as digital documents. Accepting and storing them digitally can be more efficient for students and the institution alike. Students are relieved of the expense of printing multiple copies of lengthy documents, and university units are relieved of the inefficiencies of interoffice routing, collating, and storage of multiple copies.

- **Knowledge-sharing.** Most institutions find that ETDs are being downloaded hundreds if not thousands of times. By comparison, most printed theses and dissertations are seldom used. ETDs appear to be an effective way of sharing original research both across and beyond the academy.

### **Strategic opportunities for libraries**

- **Electronic authoring and scholarly communication.** ETDs present an important opportunity for helping students and institutions gain more experience with authorship in the electronic environment, and thereby addressing more directly key scholarly communication issues like intellectual property, how theses and dissertations relate to other types of scholarly publishing (e.g., peer-reviewed books and articles), effective presentation of research results, etc. Further discussions can include how to get published, the market for scholarly monographs and articles, and how new scholarly authors can act as responsible participants in and contributors to that market. Students who go on to faculty positions will have been introduced to important issues that they will face as publishing scholars.

- **Institutional repositories.** Many college and universities find senior theses and graduate theses and dissertations to be exactly the kind of "intellectual output of the institution" that their local digital repository is intended to host, and target them for their

initial implementation. Moreover, unlike most scholarly articles, theses and dissertations remain the intellectual property of the student author whether or not they are published by UMI (see below). Students often recognize the benefits of open-access digital publication and are excited to participate in these projects. Open-access publication maximizes the visibility of their work and enhances the likelihood that it will be discovered and cited by other authors, and deposit into an institutional repository (unlike, for instance, posting it on a Web site) integrates it into a program of long-term stewardship with a persistent address and greater likelihood of remaining usable in the future.

### **Issues for campus discussion**

- **Copyright management.** Most universities allow theses and dissertations to remain the intellectual property of the student authors, even if one of the requirements for the degree is that the dissertation be published in some form (for example, through UMI). UMI's publishing agreement both stipulates that students both retain copyright to their original work and requires that students assert that use of any copyright-protected materials in the dissertation is authorized by the owner or falls under the copyright law's fair-use defense. This presents an important opportunity for libraries and graduate schools to help educate students about copyright.

It is increasingly common, however, that students will use in their dissertations materials that they have previously published as journal articles and book chapters. Copyright education needs to begin earlier than the dissertation stage, since most students will not have made arrangements with their editors or publishers for permission to re-use this material.

Libraries, teaching faculty, and graduate schools can, in consultation with college or university offices of research and legal counsel, help students understand the processes of copyright transfer and negotiation

of the terms of the author agreement, and can also help students request post-publication permissions by supplying templates of letters to publishers.

### **Open access and the role of UMI**

Arguably, the benefits of ETDs are most fully realized if the works are openly available via the Web and common search engines. However, most universities with graduate programs have long-standing arrangements with UMI to publish and preserve their theses and dissertations and index them through Dissertation Abstracts. UMI's primary publishing platform is ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, an online full-text database available only by subscription.

UMI also provides preservation services for the textual portion of its theses and dissertations (including works submitted electronically) using both microform and digital backups. Many researchers and graduate administrators consider indexing and publication through UMI an essential step in establishing the careers of young scholars.

Recently, ProQuest/UMI has introduced an "open access" option ([il.proquest.com/products\\_umi/dissertations/epoa.shtml](http://il.proquest.com/products_umi/dissertations/epoa.shtml)). This option is defined in the ProQuest/UMI Publishing Agreement; students select open access or "traditional" (i.e., fee-based) publishing when they submit the dissertation through UMI.

For a fee of \$95, UMI will make the dissertation freely available for discovery and access from its site, and provide an electronic copy to the author's institution for open dissemination through a repository or Web site. Under the traditional publishing model, the student is eligible for royalties based on subscription and hard-copy sales; under the open-access model the student declines royalties. Students may elect to impose an embargo period with either the traditional or the open-access model.

If open access is elected, institutions will wish to consider whether this is voluntary or prescribed institutionally, and whether the

cost should be born by the student or covered by the institution. Institutions will also wish to consider whether the services and benefits offered by UMI are commensurate with the fee.

The Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD) is "an international organization dedicated to promoting the adoption, creation, use, dissemination and preservation of electronic analogues to the traditional paper-based theses and dissertations" ([www.ndltd.org/](http://www.ndltd.org/); ACRL is a member of NDLTD).

NDLTD provides documentation on the creation and management of theses and dissertations in electronic form, and hosts an experimental union catalog of electronic theses and dissertations based on the OAI Protocol ([rocky.dlib.vt.edu/~etdunion/cgi-bin/index.pl](http://rocky.dlib.vt.edu/~etdunion/cgi-bin/index.pl)).

### **Access control, patents, and prior publication**

In some disciplines, open publication of theses or dissertations may be seen as premature, and may impede application for patents or publication of the work in a scholarly journal. To address this concern, some institutions incorporate access controls into their institutional repositories, to restrict access altogether or to the local campus for a limited period of time (an access "embargo"). UMI can also accommodate access embargoes. However, concerns over the effect of open access on future publication can be exaggerated.

Dissertations that will later be published as books are likely to require extensive revision, and the open availability of the dissertation should not be presumed to undercut its future market. Librarians and graduate school staff should also anticipate the need for campus-wide discussion about the issue of access control and post-dissertation publishing options.

### **Preservation issues**

UMI requires that the textual portion of theses and dissertations be submitted in PDF

format, and most institutions that host theses and dissertations locally also require this. When properly formatted, PDF files have a good likelihood of remaining readable well into the future. (Proper formatting includes embedded fonts, use of non-proprietary file formats like TIFF and JPEG for still images, and not embedding multimedia files.) However, the multimedia files that so nicely enhance a dissertation's expressiveness are less likely to remain usable over long periods of time.

Students should be counseled to choose their file formats carefully and to structure their textual work so that it is comprehensible without the multimedia. At the same time, the importance of non-textual media creates an opportunity to encourage campus-wide discussion of the university's archival responsibility for the knowledge it creates, the role of appropriate standards and metadata, and the collaborative development of an appropriate cyberinfrastructure.

### A continued opportunity for collaboration

Concern for the production, distribution, and retention of original research produced by graduate students has always been a point of potential collaboration between libraries and graduate schools. Thanks to emerging ETD programs and the increasing complexity of the copyright environment in which we work, there is opportunity for fruitful collaboration between these two campus agencies leading to serious campus discussion over the entry of new generations of scholars into the system of scholarly communication.

### Selected university ETD sites

California Institute of Technology: [library.caltech.edu/etd/](http://library.caltech.edu/etd/)

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis: <https://idea.iupui.edu/dspace/handle/1805/199>

University of Kansas: [www.graduate.ku.edu/~etd/](http://www.graduate.ku.edu/~etd/)

University of Texas: [www.utexas.edu/ogs/etd/](http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/etd/)

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University: [scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/](http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/)

### Other resources

Copyright Crash Course Online Tutorial (University of Texas): [www.lib.utsystem.edu/copyright/](http://www.lib.utsystem.edu/copyright/)

Crews, K.D. New Media, New Rights, and Your Dissertation (ProQuest): [www.umi.com/products\\_umi/dissertations/copyright/](http://www.umi.com/products_umi/dissertations/copyright/)

Joan Lippincott, "Institutional Strategies and Policies for Electronic Theses and Dissertations," *Educause Center for Applied Research, Research Bulletin* vol. 2006 (13) June 20, 2006. Available at [connect.educause.edu/library/erb0613](http://connect.educause.edu/library/erb0613)

Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations: [www.ndltd.org/](http://www.ndltd.org/)

ProQuest/UMI Dissertations Submissions Site: [dissertations.umi.com/](http://dissertations.umi.com/)

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PPI has a limited number of IMLS-funded scholarships available for librarians from under-represented groups as well as leaders of libraries in historically black colleges and universities, tribal colleges, and Hispanic-serving institutions.




