Saving Trees, Time, and Money: Best Practices & Resources for ETDs

WHY ETDS?

Posting Electronic Theses and Dissertations in the IR offers higher institutional affiliation and visibility; you can also manage the ETD workflow through Digital Commons, which is saving time and money for a growing number of DC institutions. Still not convinced?

- Collecting graduate scholarship is a great way to kick start IR content development—since it’s not previously published, you don’t have to worry about copyright. It’s low-hanging fruit!
- It’s attractive fruit, too: ETDs are often among the most downloaded content in the repository.
- ETDs increase the visibility of the institution's graduate programs because they're being read and cited across the globe.
- Capturing ETDs lets you preserve and maintain more complete records of the institution’s scholarly output, for internal or external use.
- The IR gets a big visibility boost on campus when graduate students and administrators find how straightforward it is to manage ETDs through the IR.

IF YOUR THESSES AND DISSERTATIONS ARE IN PRINT:

Theses and dissertations are much more discoverable when they're online, and having them in the IR provides greater institutional affiliation, which can provide recruitment opportunities. You might want to consider a digitization initiative by scanning this year’s batch, or even last year’s. Many of our subscribers have found, however, that it’s easiest to start with a digital copy right from the start, especially since the vast majority of your graduate students will be starting with a digital document anyway. It’s easy to have students submit their own theses and dissertations, and you can still act as a gatekeeper for quality-control purposes.

IF YOUR ETDS ARE IN AN ONLINE CATALOG:

If your campus’s theses and dissertations are already digitized, it's going to be a lot more straightforward to import them into the IR. With advanced SEO practices, posting ETDs in the repository makes them—and the graduate programs that spawned them—much more visible to the outside world. If ETDs are in an online catalog, see if you can export the metadata using an Excel Spreadsheet. You can use a simple batch upload process to get all the ETDs into your IR.
in one fell swoop. Will that steal traffic away from the online catalog? Probably not; in fact, at Eastern Illinois University, they’re finding that viewers actually come to both the catalog and the IR more frequently now that ETDs are in their repository. Learn more by watching this webinar!

**IF YOUR ETDS ARE WITH PROQUEST:**

ETDs cataloged in ProQuest’s database aren’t nearly as visible as they could be in the IR. Plus, when they’re all grouped together under the graduate program and institution’s name, they can bring readers right back to your campus’s site. Check out this java applet along with the other resources under “Workflows and Proquest” for more information and tips on how to best transfer metadata and files from ProQuest’s feed into the IR.

**WORKING WITH THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

Cross-campus collaboration can be challenging, whether your graduate school has been clamoring for an easier workflow or you’d like to approach them with an ETD solution. Here are some best practices from the Digital Commons community:

**LEARN THE LAY OF THE LAND**

Do some preliminary research and find out how the graduate school is dealing with theses and dissertations now, and what the political climate is over there. If they’ve just changed around their ETD process, they probably won’t be ready to revamp it for another year or to—figure out what’s possible before trying to push a new big change.

**MEET EARLY TO ESTABLISH COMMON GOALS**

There’s no such thing as too much communication, especially at the beginning of a project. Sitting in on departmental and assembly meetings is a great way to gauge interest and start planning how to divvy up responsibilities.

**FIND YOUR FACULTY CHAMPIONS**

For better or for worse, faculty are often more likely to listen when another faculty member is presenting a new initiative. Find your open access and ETD advocates, and team up with them whenever possible; they’re great assets to have at meetings and presentations. It’s also a great idea to prepare yourself and your allies with good responses to concerns about access restrictions, funding, or anything else comes up—see “Common Concerns” and our list of educational resources for more information.

**ASK, ‘HOW CAN I HELP?’**

Change is hard, but it’ll seem less daunting if you frame the ETD initiative as a service that will make life easier. People are more likely to respond positively if you can show them examples of how implementation can create less work for them down the road. And once you have an idea of graduate school administrators’ current ETD struggles and goals, you’ll be in a good position to offer creative ideas to improve the workflow. At Eastern Illinois University, Todd Bruns had the great idea to further customize EIU’s ETD cover pages to link directly back to the graduate program’s home sites—check out this webinar to get more information!
REACH OUT AND EDUCATE

Any opportunity to talk ETDs is a good one—consider preparing a brief presentation and an elevator pitch so you’re not caught off guard. Once you’ve got key players in the graduate school on board and the initiative’s gained some momentum, make sure to reach out to the graduate students, too! We’ve seen a lot of great resources created by both library and graduate school staff. Take a look at this presentation and this flyer to see how other schools have made the case for ETDs to the graduate school and faculty, check out this instructional series of videos geared toward graduate students, and send in any materials you’ve used on your campus so that others can compare notes!

DON’T BE AFRAID TO START SMALL

Don’t feel like you have to halt ProQuest submission, instate an OA mandate, and get all the ETDs into your IR at once. Many DC institutions start with a scaled-down pilot year, often uploading Master’s theses, which are less likely to already be processed through ProQuest, and/or making electronic submission optional. Once people see how simple and rewarding the new model is, they’ll spread the word. Making ProQuest optional is a nice way to take the financial burden of graduate students, too.

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

It might seem counterintuitive, but start tracking numbers now, not later; that way you can make a solid case for ETDs as you move forward. Think about documenting circulations statistics for theses and dissertations, and keep track of how many students forego PQ submission once they’re given the option. Check out this community webinar to see how other DC institutions are using data to show the worth of their ETDs.

COMMON CONCERNS & MISCONCEPTIONS:

You’re likely to encounter some concerns and perhaps some misconceptions as you rally support for ETD improvements. Educate yourself so you can offer some informed rebuttals on the fly!

“This will hurt students’ chance of publication.”

Actually, studies have shown that most publishers don’t consider online posting to be prior publication, and some publishers have explicitly stated that making ETDs openly available helps students get discovered, which can lead to book deals. See “Access Controls and Prior Publication” for more information!

“Don’t theses and dissertations need to be indexed in ProQuest?”

Contrary to popular belief, ProQuest’s database is far from comprehensive, especially for Master’s theses, but for dissertations as well. Of course, there’s nothing stopping graduate students from submitting to ProQuest if they’d like to; however, if visibility is what they’re after, you can remind them that Digital Commons offers much better SEO.
“Is this going to take more time?”

No; in fact, the purpose is to increase efficiency. Check out the webinar in “Getting Started” for examples of schools that have saved time and money through implementing new ETD workflows.

“Is this going to cost a lot of money?”

Nope! The tools are already included in the repository platform, and many schools have found that they can save significantly on printing and storage costs.

“How will we ensure quality control if students are submitting ETDs on their own?”

Having students input their own metadata usually enhances its quality, as they’re the ones with the most stake in presenting their ETD professionally and accurately. Our system is designed to allow for review, however: no ETDs can be posted without administrative oversight, and you can assign privileges at the ETD-community level to administrators in the graduate school.

## SAMPLE WORKFLOWS FROM THE DIGITAL COMMONS COMMUNITY

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<th>Workflow Model</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
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<td>ETDs in the IR: After the Fact</td>
<td>University of South Florida</td>
<td>Greater institutional affiliation,</td>
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<td>Greater readership,</td>
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<td>Easy transition</td>
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<td>Self-Submission from Early Drafts: The</td>
<td>University of Kentucky and Western University</td>
<td>All of the above, plus</td>
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<td>Whole Enchilada</td>
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<td>Start-to-finish record-keeping within the</td>
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Digital Commons Guides

User Manual: Administering a Series in the Digital Commons Repository

Disciplines: Introduction to Digital Commons Three-Tiered Taxonomy of Academic Disciplines

Batch Upload, Export and Revise with Excel: How to Manage Bulk Records in a Digital Commons Repository

Dissemination and Discovery: Open Access Publishing for Graduate Work Through Digital Commons

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Getting Started

Increasing the Visibility and Impact of Graduate Research with Electronic Theses and Dissertations (webinar)

Matt Dumouchel, Western University;
Todd Bruns and Stacey Knight-Davis, Eastern Illinois University; and
Dave Seitz, bepress

This is a great resource for anyone trying to make the case for ETDs on their campus. Matt Dumouchel, Western University’s Information Systems Manager, and Illinois University’s Todd Bruns and Stacey Knight-Davis, IR Librarian and Head of Library Technology Services, discuss their different approaches to implementing successful ETD programs. The first half of the webinar describes Western University’s workflow, highlighting aspects that have been particularly successful for them; it’s a great starting place if you want to get a sense of how other people are managing the entire ETD process through Digital Commons, and it offers some very impressive numbers about how much time they’ve saved along the way. Todd Bruns and Stacey Knight-Davis talk about some of the statistics they’ve gathered in the early years of their ETD program through their IR The Keep, and the impact those numbers have made. It’s a great presentation, especially for campuses who might not be ready to integrate the entire ETD process through the system, or who already have their ETDs in an online catalog.
Managing ETDs through Digital Commons: A Case Study at UMass Amherst (webinar)

Meghan Banach, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Courtney Smith, bepress

Meghan Banach, Metadata Catalog Librarian at University of Massachusetts - Amherst, addresses the benefits and challenges of managing ETDs through the repository, and best practices the library has developed over time. Her discussion includes a consideration of workflows, access controls, and metadata collection, as well as partnerships between the Graduate School and the library.

Promotional Materials and Presentations

Beyond Access: The Added Value of Electronic Thesis Implementation

Marisa Ramirez, California Polytechnic State University

This one-page flyer explains benefits of ETD implementation to students, campus partners, and the library. It’s a handy resource to get you thinking about how to market the ETD initiative to different audiences on your own campus.

Implementing ETDs @ UConn

Michael J. Bennett, University of Connecticut-Storrs

This short presentation, designed for graduate school management, makes a great case for Digital Commons as a complete ETD solution, as well as a broader argument that graduate dissertations should be openly available to the public.

Access Controls and Prior Publication

Can't Find It, Can't Sign It: On Dissertation Embargoes

Impact of Publishers’ Policy on Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Distribution Options within the United States

Angela M. McCutcheon
This comprehensive 2010 dissertation explores the question of whether publication in a repository has an impact on acceptance for publication down the road. McCutcheon also offers an in-depth look at different ETD programs throughout U.S. institutional repositories.

Do Open Access Electronic Theses and Dissertations Diminish Publishing Opportunities in the Social Sciences and Humanities? Findings from a 2011 Survey of Academic Publishers


This article provides a more succinct and specific look at academic publishers' editorial policies around ETDs with regards to the social sciences and humanities.

An Investigation of ETDs as Prior Publications: Findings from the 2011 NDLTD Publishers' Survey


If you're too pressed for time to read the article, above, check out the authors' conference presentation for an overview of their findings, and dig deeper into the details of what publishers said about publishing Open Access ETDs in their conference paper.

Open Access to Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs)

Peter Suber

Peter Suber presents a compelling case for making ETDs openly available in institutional repositories.

Workflows & ProQuest

Light on ETDs: Out from the Shadows

Wendy Robertson and Rebecca Routh, University of Iowa

Wendy Robertson and Rebecca Routh discuss ETDs at the University of Iowa, including a consideration of metadata, workflows, and benefits. The presentation includes information on converting records between ProQuest, MARC, and bepress XML.

ETD Management & Publishing in the ProQuest System and the University Repository: A Comparative Analysis

Confidential. Not for use outside your institution.
Gail P. Clement, Texas A&M University, and
Fred Rascoe, Georgia Institute of Technology

http://jlsc-pub.org/jlsc/vol1/iss4/1/

This study, originally published in the Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication, compares pros and cons of using ProQuest Dissertation Publishing system versus the institutional repository for ETDs. It provides a brief history of UMI/ProQuest and ETDs in America, offers a head-to-head comparison of ETD workflows at the authors' universities as compared to ProQuest’s ETD management services, and includes a list of schools that have made ProQuest submission optional. This is a great resource for schools that are considering doing the same.

Other Resources

*Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD) Resource List*

http://www.ndltd.org/resources

A collection of resources related to ETD programs and publication of ETDs in institutional repositories.

*ETD-L Listserv*

http://listserv.vt.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=ETD-L

This listserv addresses issues related to ETDs, including policy, copyright, publication, workflow, and other topics.