Retrospective and Prospective Open Access to Research Theses: A Case Study from The University of Aberdeen

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The University of Aberdeen

- Founded 1495, Scotland’s third oldest university; UK’s fifth oldest
- One of Scotland’s four “Ancient universities”
- 16,500 students; 3,000 staff
- 90% of research activity of international quality
- UK Top 10 for student experience
- Over 89% of subjects rated Excellent / Highly Satisfactory
- New curriculum introduced in 2010, including developing 'graduate attributes'
Library, Special Collections and Museums

- 4 libraries in system: 1.3 million volumes
  - Sir Duncan Rice Library
  - Taylor Law Library
  - Medical Library
  - Reid Library
- Special Collections and Glucksman Conservation Centres
  - 250,000 rare books
  - Over 4,000 MSS collections
- 7 museum collections recognised as nationally important
Other Players…

- **ProQuest**
  - Based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA
  - Major publisher of electronic, microfilm etc based sources

- **RLUK**
  - “a consortium of institutions whose mission is to ensure that the UK should have the best research library support in the world.”
  - mainly university research and national libraries
Retrospective / Prospective Theses Digitisation Project
The Project

• Project has two strands: retrospective digitisation and prospective publishing/digitisation:

  1. Pilot project between ProQuest and several RLUK libraries to digitise retrospectively, at least 2,000 theses from each institution
     – project to be extended to other HEIs if pilot is successful

  2. Opportunity for new graduating doctoral students from each university to immediately publish their thesis in *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* database - under a Licence to Publish - as they graduate
     – entirely voluntary
Retrospective Digitisation Strand
Retrospective Digitization Strand

- Pilot project with 4 or 5 RLUK libraries acting as pilots: aim to digitise 8,000 theses in first phase 2012-2013
  - Aberdeen; Cardiff; Exeter; Leicester; UCL
- Participation could be extended to non-RLUK libraries
- Need to establish if the project methodologies and approaches could be satisfactory for all:
  - libraries have different approaches to thesis format and layout, cataloguing, storing, lending, digitising, publishing their theses
- ProQuest to digitize 20,000 more theses from HEIs in 2013; and 20,000 in both 2014 and 2015 (68,000)
- HEI’s to select the theses for digitization;
  - e.g. by date, by subject, by faculty, by level of use, or by importance on-campus: no limitation apart from quantity (2,000)
Retrospective Digitisation Process

- ProQuest to cover packing and shipping costs
- ProQuest to insure the theses
- Paper theses to be digitised in UK and returned to home libraries (if requested)
- ProQuest to bear the digitisation costs.
- ProQuest to provide digitisations to university libraries for local use, such as loading into local repositories
- ProQuest to create microfilm copies of the theses for preservation purposes (stored in Ann Arbor UMI vault)
- ProQuest to work with each library to find adequate solutions to dis-binding and rebinding
- ProQuest to supply MARC/metadata elements
Early Issues for HEIs

• Pilot HEIs approached obtaining institutional “buy-in” at senior management level in different ways:
  • e.g. informal authorisation from a Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, to formal papers to University Management Groups for approval of project participation

• HEI’s took different approaches to the Licence / Contractual Agreement and seeking changes:
  • some sought few or no changes: Aberdeen sought a range of changes even to already revised contract (e.g. explicit acknowledgement of moral rights; attempts to insert “boilerplates” etc)

• Initial timescale was tight for some universities
Early Issues for HEIs

• Copyright – could slow/sabotage the project…
  • copyright in the thesis itself
    • obtaining 2000+ permissions to digitise?
    • how to contact copyright owners?
  • evaluate third party copyright works in the thesis?

• Selection for digitisation issues:
  • at Aberdeen Project Group recommended selection criteria to Library Senior Management Team
  • robust procedures needed to ensure that theses with confidential material, patent issues, privacy issues, etc issues were excluded

• Physical location and workflow issues
• ProQuest site visit
Early Issues for Universities

• Theses which are more difficult to digitise:
  • e.g. from subjects like Art. Art History, Archaeology etc; with inserts/enclosures; identifying duplicates of already digitised items

• Working with remote scanning companies
  • e.g. the company scanning Aberdeen theses is located in Dublin; effective communication over problems is essential

• Different approaches to different parts of the process:
  • e.g. copyright; return of print copies

• Timetable for supply of the digitised versions

• Communication / Collaboration / Sharing experience
Benefits of the Project

• To participant libraries:
  • retrospective digitisation of at least 2,000 print theses;
  • space savings (for some);
  • no financial costs to library - just staff resource;
  • significant boost to institutional research repository or repositories;
  • showcasing of graduate research in various sources;
  • marketing for research programmes, departments etc;
  • building relationship with ProQuest and collaboration among participating universities
  • secure preservation
Benefits of the Project

• To ProQuest and more generally:
  • boost for UK (and European) content in ProQuest’s commercial databases and services creating a critical mass of high quality UK content
    • e.g. full text PQDT database
  • opportunities for ProQuest for individual copy sales
  • open access as project proceeds to significant corpus of mainly unpublished UK graduate research, potentially over long time period
  • secure preservation of significant number of research outputs
  • experience of and learning from commercial and sectoral collaboration
Prospective Publishing Strand
Future Graduate Theses Publishing

• Opportunity for new graduating doctoral students to directly publish their thesis in PQDT

• Participation in prospective publication of theses does not impede participant institution’s other publishing options (i.e. agreement is non-exclusive)

• For the student, publication is entirely voluntary

• Universities only commit to encouraging their students to publish their prospective theses via the ProQuest ETD administrator (an online submission tool for students to publish their theses):
  • for five years
  • renewable if all parties are satisfied
Key Points

• Student always retains the copyright in their work
• Copyright guides to be provided to help students deal with and make judgements about copyright issues before publishing
• Student may place embargos on thesis because of patents, confidentiality, security questions or for any other reason.
• Student receives a royalty on individual copy sales (10%).
• Each thesis published is given an ISBN reference and listed on the PQDT database
• Publication in PQDT is free
• No restrictions on the institution’s use of student files - may include these in their institutional repositories.
Benefits

• Student can publish his/her research in a major international database – only if he/she wishes to

• Visibility for student’s research

• Citations in leading subject indexes further increase visibility of authors’ research through UMI dissertation citation feeds to many subject indexes including ABI/INFORM™, ERIC™, PsycINFO, CINAHL, ProQuest Sociological Abstracts, Chemical Abstracts etc

• Visibility for institutional research

• Increases open access to research (student still publishes their e-version in the institutional repository)

• Supports ProQuest business model for the retrospective digitisation strand of the project
Issues

• Protecting the interests of the student:
  • involved careful review of the draft Licence to Publish

• Need to ensure tight institutional procedures to ensure that students do not publish theses which are/should be embargoed:
  • but this is not a new issue

• Need to ensure that students understand the nature and potential consequences of online publishing

• Student remuneration for commercial use

• Reports on commercial use from ProQuest to the University

• Copyright
ETD Administrator Dissertation Publishing Agreement

This Agreement is between the author (Author) and ProQuest LLC, through its UMI® Dissertation Publishing business (ProQuest/UMI). Under this Agreement, Author grants ProQuest/UMI certain rights to preserve, archive and publish the dissertation or thesis, abstract, and index terms (the Work) provided by Author to ProQuest/UMI.

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Some Points of Interest from the Project in Addition to Already Identified Benefits

- Differing approaches of libraries/universities to the same issues/problems
- Differing attitudes/approaches to the problem of legal compliance
- Project has made some universities look again at existing procedures – especially to support the prospective publication strand of the project
- Timescale, factors and over-optimism for completing digitisation for each university
Submission of Research Theses

Registy and Binding & Reprographic Services, June 2013

Submission Requirements of a Thesis
The regulations state that every thesis submitted for a higher degree must:
1. Contain, bound in, a summary of its salient points.
2. Contain, bound in, a signed declaration stating:
   - that the thesis has been composed by the candidate
   - that it has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree
   - that it has been done by the candidate
   - the sources of information from which quotations have been taken
   - the title of the thesis.
3. Be accompanied by a copy of a separate abstract, not exceeding 300 words (which may be published by the University). This should be printed on a single sheet of international paper size A4 paper and should show the author and title of the thesis.
5. Be accompanied by a justication approved by the Supervisor(s) and Head of School concerned if the thesis is to be withdrawn from consultation on the grounds of confidentiality.

The TITLE PAGE should contain:
1. The title of the thesis.
2. The statement ‘A thesis presented for the degree of...
3. The name of the author, academic qualifications and where obtained.
4. The year of presentation.

Maximum Length of the Thesis
If you are to be examined by thesis, the regulations specify maximum lengths which you must not exceed with the special permission of the appropriate College Postgraduate Officer, as follows:

- PhD, EngD, MD and ChM: 100,000 words
- EdD: 60,000 words
- MPNI: 70,000 words
- One year Master’s degree: 40,000 words

It should be noted that these figures are intended only as an approximate guide to maximum lengths. They include appendices and footnotes, but not bibliographies, statistical and computational compilations and analogous illustrative material (maps, facsimile documents etc). The above word-counts are upper word limits and you are encouraged to do a final word count. If your thesis is above the upper word limit you must make an application to the Registry, giving reasons why your thesis cannot be reduced in length. Remember the hallmark of a good thesis is quality, not quantity!

General Layout of the Thesis
While the regulations above must be followed precisely, on many aspects there is considerable variation between layouts preferred in different schools. If in doubt, consult your supervisor to establish what is standard practice for your school.

Preliminary Matter
This may include acknowledgements, table of contents, list of illustrations, abbreviations used etc. Consult recent theses and your supervisor to establish what is standard practice for your school.

Diagrams and Illustrations
These should be placed as close to the appropriate text as possible. If they are larger than the paper size of the text, they should be bound in a separate volume, the binding of which must correspond to that of the text. Alternatively, they may be mounted on a board sheet and folded, or folded in a pocket. You should discuss the academic content and layout of diagrams with your supervisor.

Footnotes and References
There are no hard and fast rules for these. Follow the advice of your supervisor. You may however find it helpful to consult Library Guides UG GEN097 Referencing and Citing, UG EDU018 A Guide to Referencing for Education Students or UG LAW007 Citation of Legal Authorities as appropriate.

Typing/Word Processing
Every thesis must:
- Be typewritten or printed, on one side only, on A4 size paper. Use double or one-and-a-half spacing for the main text and single spacing for indented quotations, footnotes, references and bibliography.
- Leave margins of no less than 36mm on the left side for binding and no less than 15mm on the other three sides. We strongly recommend that you follow the British Standard on the presentation of theses, BS4482: 1990.
- Notwithstanding the British Standard, the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate) has agreed that the main body of the text should be no less than point size 12.

Binding and Illustrations
For examination you must submit two soft-bound copies of your thesis to the Registry who will send these on to your examiners. Once the work has been examined and accepted, you must submit one hard-bound copy of the thesis together with an electronic copy.

Both versions will be passed to the University Library, when you are cleared to graduate.

Hard-bound Copy
The front board of the hard-bound copy should bear the title and author’s name with the degree and the year of presentation and the author’s name appearing on the spine.

Published papers should be original reprints and inserted in the binder as an appendix to the text or in a pocket inside the back cover.

Photographs must be original prints or laser copies of original prints (as long as the quality of the original prints is maintained) in all your submitted theses.

A thesis which would be more than 420 pages should be finally bound as two separate matching volumes, with a title page in each.

Arrangements should be made with the binder several weeks before the submission date.
Section A: Declaration

Please type or print in black ink.

Surname: ________________________  First name: ________________________

Student number: ________________________

Department: ________________________  School: ________________________

Title of thesis: ________________________

1. This thesis *does/does not contain confidential information which should not be divulged to any third party without written consent

   If this thesis contains confidential information there is no access to this thesis for ___________ years (not more than five)

   NB: A thesis will not be made confidential unless written justification (see Section C), approved by Supervisors and Head of School, is submitted along with the hard copy of the thesis and approved by a College Postgraduate Officer on behalf of the Academic Standards Committee (Postgraduate). Please make sure that Section C of this form is completed in order to provide written justification

2. I give permission for a copy of my thesis to be made and supplied to any bona fide library or research worker, at the Librarian's discretion, *immediately/after _______ years (not less than five)

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4. I agree to the inclusion of my thesis the University of Aberdeen institutional repository. My thesis may be made available *immediately/after _______ years (not less than five) and agree to the terms of deposit

5. My thesis may not be included in the British Library Electronic Thesis Online Service (ETHOS)

Signature: ________________________  Date: ________________________

NB: Delete as appropriate

Candidates are advised to consult a supervisor or other member of staff before signing. Candidates should note that any user of their work will be required to sign or agree to a copyright declaration and conform to the provisions of current copyright law

To be completed and returned to: Registry, University Office, University of Aberdeen, Regent Walk, Aberdeen, AB24 3FX
Aberdeen Experience

- Retrospective digitisation strand relatively easy to comply with (and we sent 2,500 theses for digitisation)
- Participation in project has/is helping us review workflows, procedures, information, communication etc
- But we do feel that our thesis submission procedures are:
  - clear
  - timely
  - well-documented
  - mandated
- But the prospective publication will/is leading to review of procedures and workflows for submission
- As with all universities some submissions still don’t follow the rules!