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# THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

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## Compromise Higher-Education Bill Takes Shape in Congress

The proposed legislation would expand the amount of information contained in watch lists on college costs and bar the secretary of education from dictating how colleges measure student learning.

## Federal Farm Bill Provides Mixed Harvest for Colleges

Student Writers Fight to Keep Their Work Off the Web

## Association Tightens Identity Verification for Medical-School Entrance Exam

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## The Chronicle Review



### Israel at 60

A history of scholarly contention surrounds a contentious history between Jews and Arabs, writes Carlin Romano. During the first Arab-Israeli war, in November 1948, Arab refugees (above) flee fighting in upper Galilee and head toward Lebanon. (Photograph by AP Images)

### 'Standard Operating Procedure'

A new film and book show the scandal at Abu Ghraib in a different light, writes Louis P. Masur.

[Complete contents](#)

### Brainstorm: Lives of the Mind

Mark Bauerlein  
**The Bad Old Days**

Have graduate requirements dropped as much as it seems for humanities Ph.D.'s?

Gina Barreca  
**Murder Mystery IX: Teltale Hearts**  
The heart is a lonely carrel.



### Student Writers Fight to Keep Their Work Off the Web

John H. Hagen, the electronic-thesis coordinator at West Virginia U., argues that online distribution enhances students' publishing prospects. Professors of writing are skeptical. (Photograph by Randy Snyder)

## Chronicle Blogs

(All times Eastern)

**Shop Talk: New Farm Buildings, a Plan in Windsor, and Relief for the Janitorial Staff** - 5/14, 10:25 a.m.

**Blackboard Unveils Application to Bring Course Updates to Facebook** - 5/14, 8:38 a.m.

**Guest Blogger: Leaks Aside, Some Modern Buildings Fit Aimiably Into Campus Contexts** - 5/14, 8:37 a.m.

**Proposal Would Restrict Certain Gifts to Colleges That Hoard Endowments** - 5/13, 7:50 p.m.

**Tension Over Title IX Shows Itself in Lawsuits** - 5/13, 5:27 p.m.

**U. of Colorado at Boulder Wants to Hire 'Professor of Conservative Thought'** - 5/13, 2:53 p.m.

**Turn Your Laptop Into an Earthquake Sensor** - 5/13, 2:50 p.m.

**N.C. Community Colleges Will Not Admit Illegal Immigrants After All** - 5/13, 1:37 p.m.

[See all Chronicle blogs](#)

## Discussion Forums

**The Brown Bag:** Mary Jo Olenick, a higher-education architect at the S/L/A/M Collaborative, will answer questions about how the college campus needs to be reimagined by planners and architects in light of the cellphone generation. Join us for a live chat on Thursday, May 22, at noon, U.S. Eastern time.

## Also of Interest

### Spring Commencement Speakers

See a [list](#) of commencement speakers scheduled to speak at colleges this spring, and submit your institution's speaker for inclusion in *The Chronicle's* searchable database.

### The Chronicle of Philanthropy

#### Putting Charity to the Test

An Internal Revenue Service official got nonprofit leaders' attention with an announcement that the tax agency may begin applying a decades-old test to ensure that charities are spending their money

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(144 listings)

### First Person

#### Battered Academic Egos

In your first year on the tenure track, be prepared for your confidence to take a beating.

### Career News

#### Bound for Dispute

Hoping to keep their theses available for eventual commercial publication, creative-writing students at some colleges raise objections to policies allowing open access online.

### First Person

#### The Future of Plagiarism

Back when I was a student, it, like, took a lot of effort to pilfer someone else's work.

## On Hiring

### Presidential Appointments

New leaders step up in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and California.

### Huh? If I Were a Dog?!

Gene C. Fant Jr. asks about the weirdest questions you've been asked in an interview.

### Employer Profiles

[In-depth information](#) for job candidates, provided by employers.

### Careers Forums

Balancing Work and Life

appropriately.

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**Arts & Letters Daily**

[A guide](#) to some of the best writing on the Web.

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#### VIDEOS AND NO-SHOWS

More colleges are taping lectures so that students can watch online, but not all professors are sure that the results are good for their classrooms. [more...](#)

### Research & Books

#### MORE THAN GENES

Jeremy K. Nicholson, who has labored for decades in search of molecules that predict health and illness, may finally have found them. [more...](#)

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Despite economic woes, many states have spared higher education from major budget cuts. [more...](#)

### Money & Management

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In economically struggling communities, small private colleges help generate development projects in large part as a matter of survival. [more...](#)

### Information Technology

#### BOUND FOR DISPUTE

Hoping to keep their theses available for eventual commercial publication, creative-writing students at some colleges raise objections to policies allowing open access online. [more...](#)

### Students

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As students, parents, and accreditors pay more and more attention in the measurable benefits of higher education, colleges step up their career services. [more...](#)

### Athletics

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The NCAA has penalized fewer teams than it expected this year over athletes' poor academic performance. [more...](#)

### International

#### SUCCESS IN THE GULF

Cornell University's medical school in Qatar has graduated its first class, marking the first time an American medical college has awarded degrees outside the United States. [more...](#)

### Commentary

#### THEY'VE EARNED AN EDUCATION

The young people serving their country in Iraq and Afghanistan deserve a GI Bill as good as the one waiting for their grandfathers after World War II, says James Wright. [more...](#)

### The Chronicle Review

#### EPICALLY INTIMATE

A woman translator takes on Virgil's quintessentially manly classic, the *Aeneid*. [more...](#)

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From the issue dated May 16, 2008

# Readers Not Wanted: Student Writers Fight to Keep Their Work Off the Web

By ANDREA L. FOSTER

Mark Brazaitis worries that his university may sabotage the literary careers of his students.

As director of the creative-writing program at West Virginia University, Mr. Brazaitis oversees the training of about 30 graduate students, who hope to become published authors. At the end of their three years in the program, they hand in their magnum opuses, master's theses that could one day appear in print in literary journals or books.

For now, creative-writing students can submit their theses on paper. But starting next fall, the coordinator of the campuswide electronic-thesis program wants to require those students, like others at West Virginia, to submit their writing projects electronically and make them publicly available after five years.

That policy could hurt students, says Mr. Brazaitis, an associate professor of English, because publishers will not accept poems, short stories, or novels that are already freely available for everyone to read online.

"Goodness knows," he says, "it's hard enough to get published without this sort of handicap."

Tension about how theses should be disseminated is brewing on other campuses, too. Open-access advocates, often scientists and librarians, are pressing for the scholarly works to be made publicly available online. Professors of writing and their students, however, argue that literary projects are fundamentally different from laboratory experiments. They say student authors should be the ones to control how their work is distributed.

## **Publishers' 'Dying Market'**

The squabble at West Virginia is unlikely to be resolved quickly.

John H. Hagen, the electronic-thesis coordinator, who is also a library administrator, insists that online distribution enhances students' publishing prospects rather than thwarts them. Publishers are spreading spurious claims about electronic dissemination of theses, he says, to preserve their "dying market." And he argues that once professors are educated about the issue, they will come around to his side.

"All theses and dissertations should become open access," says Mr. Hagen. "It's important in terms of

being able to trace the cultural and historical aspects of academia."

Mr. Hagen, who is on the board of the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, a nonprofit group that advocates electronic dissemination of theses, has data to back up his argument. He surveyed 34 West Virginia alumni who earned master-of-fine-arts degrees in creative writing, and he found that students who had allowed open access to their theses went on to have more-successful careers, in terms of material published and further education, than those who didn't.

Professors of writing are skeptical. Publishers still operate by the rule of turning down manuscripts that are already freely available, says Mr. Brazaitis, who is a novelist. He and others at West Virginia will voice their concerns to administrators "again and again" until they understand, he adds.

Limiting access to theses for five years, as Mr. Hagen proposes, isn't good enough, Mr. Brazaitis says. Students' publishing aspirations could still be subverted. A part of his own creative-writing thesis was published in a literary magazine 15 years after he earned a graduate degree from Bowling Green State University, he notes.

He has support from the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, an advocacy group, which adopted guidelines in October 2006 advising colleges not to force students to broadly disseminate their theses.

If institutions require creative-writing students to file their theses electronically, the association says, then the students should be allowed to restrict access through a password system.

### **Putting Writers in Charge**

The writing group's statement helped persuade some institutions, Bowling Green State and Louisiana State University among them, to exclude creative-writing theses from open-access policies.

Jeanne M. Leiby, an associate professor of English at Louisiana State, says it makes sense for students to limit access to their unpublished work because of the economics of the publishing world. As editor of the esteemed journal *The Southern Review*, Ms. Leiby says literary magazines cannot survive unless they secure exclusive use of manuscripts.

"If a work is made fully available online," she says, "I'm not accepting it."

Demanding that creative-writing students relinquish their theses to their colleges, she argues, is like forcing art students to turn over their paintings.

But some institutions are not ceding ground to students and their professors.

Ms. Leiby previously taught at the University of Central Florida, where she and other writing professors lost the battle to restrict access to theses. She says that many faculty members supported limiting access, but some administrators did not.

Patricia J. Bishop, vice provost and dean of the University of Central Florida, says it has an obligation, as a taxpayer-supported institution, to make theses publicly available. "If we don't disseminate the work eventually," she says, "I think we would not be serving the public."

The university's policy — recently approved by the provost and Faculty Senate — will allow restricted

online access to theses for no more than five years. After that they will be publicly available on the Web. Students previously could limit access to their theses for no more than one year.

Ms. Bishop says students haven't objected to the policy.

## **Student Revolts**

On at least two other campuses, however, writing students have beaten back open-access policies for their theses.

Lola L. Lopes, interim provost at the University of Iowa, abruptly reversed course in March on a plan to make fine-arts theses freely available online, after vigorous complaints from students in the university's prestigious writing programs.

A similar uprising occurred at Bowling Green State in October 2006. Writing students, with the support of the Graduate Student Senate, demanded and got an exemption from electronic publication for creative-writing theses.

Some campuses have broadened the pool of students who are excused from providing open access to their theses.

At Florida State University, all graduate students will be able to permanently limit online access to their theses to readers with a Florida State Internet address. The change will probably take effect in the fall. Now students can sequester their theses for two years. As alumni they can request limited access for another two years.

Mark Winegardner, a novelist and English professor who directs the university's creative-writing program, pushed for the recent change. He says professors and students who demand exceptions to such policies only for creative-writing students risk giving the writing discipline a bad name.

"It looks like the weird creative types are asking to be let out of gym class," he says.

Graduate students in other disciplines also need to worry about publishers' rejecting theses because they have been freely distributed online, says Mr. Winegardner.

He recommends that scholarly arts and humanities groups take a hard line in pressing colleges to change their thesis policies.

The groups could maintain a publicly available Web site, he suggests, listing institutions that demand open access. Prospective students could use it to determine which ones to cross off their lists.

"Everyone will change their policies in a minute and a half," he says.

<http://chronicle.com>  
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