
CONFERENCE REPORT

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Electronic Theses and Dissertations Worldwide

Highlights of the ETD 2003 Symposium

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Introduction

The electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) movement is truly becoming a global phenomenon, and the [ETD 2003](#) Symposium has certainly lived up to its motto "Next Steps: Electronic Theses and Dissertations Worldwide." Held for the first time outside the United States at the venerable campus of Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany from May 21st - 24th, this was the 6th in a series of annual conferences organized by the "Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations" (NDLTD). The record number of 215 participants from 46 nations included librarians, graduate school administrators, information technologists, graduate faculty, students and vendors. The rigorous schedule



included a dazzling array of 68 speakers with plenary sessions, panel discussions, parallel break-out sessions, workshops and tutorials, and a vendor exhibit area, not to mention a whole host of social and cultural activities, such as site-seeing tours and "Dinner with the Dinosaurs."

NDLTD has worked diligently to promote inclusion by fostering sponsorships to support educational travel grants. Through the generosity and support of organizations like UNESCO, the Open Society Institute, the German Academic Exchange Service and the German Academic Research Foundation, the conference could support the participation of 40 library and computing experts from developing countries in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe.

Conference Activities

For the Berlin symposium, the conference organizers acquired an international range of interesting talks exploring common approaches and challenges to the topic of scholarly electronic publishing especially of ETDs.

Leading experts such as Axel Plathe (UNESCO) focused on "Scientific Information for Equitable Knowledge Societies". Joan Lippincott, Coalition for Networked Information (CNI), looked into "Collaboration and ETDs: Institutional and International Strategies". The conference featured speakers from around the world presenting different projects and approaches from Africa, Asia, Australia, and Europe as well as in North and South America. All in all, there were more than 60 different presentations within the parallel sessions with tracks entitled: "National ETD Initiatives", "Multimedia Documents and Technologies", "Technical Issues", "Special ETD Projects", "Library Issues and OAI Activities", "Technology and Workflow", "ETD-Training Methods", "LaTeX and ETDs", "Long Term Preservation and Special Applications".

Along with the conference were organized workshops covering special aspects of ETDs: "XML-based Approaches for ETDs within OpenOffice", "DTDs for ETDs", and "Multimedia Documents and Technologies".

The following tutorials were also offered: "ETDs for very beginners", "German ETD project, Aims - developments - preferences", "CyberThèses", "Introduction to XML-ETDs" and "How can your repository can become OAI compliant?".

The conference won major sponsorship for the event from: Brocade, CISCO Systems, Controlware, Enterasys, ExLibris, IBM Germany and Carus, ImageWare, Lehmanns, LIB-IT GmbH, NIONEX, Springer, SUN Microsystems and T-Systems.

Participants in this conference found new ideas, friends and sources for professional development. ETD 2003 served as a forum for all participants who are shaping and defining the digital library agenda for the 21st century.

Conference Highlights

The presentations at ETD 2003 revealed new questions, insights and solutions for this emerging frontier of digital libraries. Many of the papers are available online in full text in the [conference proceedings](#).

Discussions

Suzie Allard (University of Kentucky) moderated an interactive panel session, "The UNESCO Guide brings

ETD's to Your University". This panel highlighted the benefits of NDLTD membership, as those members in attendance were able to exchange ideas and provide support for ETD programs at all levels of development. The distinguished panelists came from all regions of the world:

- Africa: Felix Ubugo
- Asia: Shalini Urs
- Europe: Ute Schwens
- Latin America and the Caribbean: Ana Pavani
- North America: John Hagen
- Oceania: Andrew Wells

Discussion focused on ETD program implementation, particularly overcoming the difficulties facing developing nations. Panelists' experiences and expertise provided advice which included establishing coordinated regional training programs patterned on the success in Brazil, and regional consortia efforts such as DATAD in Africa. Attendees also discussed university-based programs versus national efforts such as the Australian Digital Theses program and the Vidyaniidhi project in India. Other topics included using free, open source software such as D-Space applications and the NDLTD ETD system. Pertinent sections of the UNESCO ETD Guide were highlighted so attendees could consult resources after they returned home.

Another interactive session, led by Gail McMillan (Virginia Tech), focused on the NDLTD and issues of long-term preservation and archiving. From the session discussion, it was established that those involved in ETD projects could begin by:

- creating a registry of documentation and best practices,
- establishing interoperability for searching, storage and access,
- making a legal contingency plan,
- focusing on content over applications,
- creating low-cost OAIS persistent digital caches,
- gaining control of the information, document policies and procedures to ensure the information is preserved and to enable authentication,
- advocating file formats of easiest migration and management (i.e. Adobe and UMI/ProQuest), and
- using persistent identifiers and open-source turnkey systems for digital assets management (i.e., DSpace).

Emerging Solutions

Following are some solutions to problems faced by those engaged in or planning ETD programs.

The [Academic Journal Policy Database](#) (University of Cincinnati), endorsed by Tim Brace and Georgia Harper (University of Texas at Austin) provides publisher policies, including a viewpoint on ETDs for over 1,700 entries.

[CyberThèses](#) announced by Martin Sévigny (AJLSM) and Viviane Boulétreau (Université Lumière), is an open source ETD system freely available under GPL (GNU General Public License).

[DSpace](#), presented by Keith Glavash and Margret Branschofsky (MIT Libraries), is a freely available open source software platform that enables institutions to establish a digital repository for ETDs.

[UMI/ProQuest](#) is teaming with Berkeley Electronic Press to provide the infrastructure for an online

submission system for ETDs.

The [Union Catalog for ETDs](#) demonstrated by Ed Fox (Virginia Tech) is a free online service, which is sponsored by NDLTD and VTLS (Virginia Tech Library System). This multilingual database references ETDs from around the world.

The [UNESCO Guide to ETDs](#) presented by John Hagen (West Virginia University) is a comprehensive resource created by NDLTD experts, which contains information on all aspects of ETDs. It includes guidelines, workflow models and best practices and is an excellent resource for graduate students who are writing ETDs, graduate faculty mentors, graduate deans who want to initiate ETD programs and IT administrators at universities. The Guide is freely available online in English, French and Spanish.

The [UNESCO](#) Clearing House presented by Susanne Dobratz (Humboldt University) defines the needs of developing countries in the area of ETDs, offers discussion opportunities for international interaction, and establishes a database of institutions, experts and materials.

Summary

In his ETD 2003 closing remarks, Ed Fox (NDLTD Director) announced that plans at Virginia Tech include continued efforts with MARIAN, LOCKSS, automatic classification, DL logging standard (XML), [NUDL](#), [NSDL](#), [Open Digital Libraries](#), [Digital Library in a Box](#) and static repositories.

[NDLTD](#) is now incorporated as a non-profit charitable organization for educational purposes. To achieve its goals, NDLTD encourages all those who are interested to participate by sharing software, documentation, ideas, innovations, and volunteer efforts within their organizations as well as regionally and globally.

NDLTD member services welcomes new members, tracks progress and statistics, encourages mentoring programs, offers distance education, creates classes of members and institutes an appropriate dues structure. A speakers bureau under development — organized by region — focuses on interested universities, new members, outreach to other communities and on "training the trainers". A public relations kit is being implemented for collaborative contributions from members. Disciplinary liaisons are being fostered. Standards development continues on XML for documents as well as on metadata. Preservation strategies include the LOCKSS, OpenURLs, name authorities and digital rights management. OCLC will expand the OAI data provider on ETDs for the Union Catalog.

The Big Picture

The NDLTD mission is to spread the ETD gospel and NDLTD has been actively engaged in encouraging and nourishing the development and implementation of ETD programs at institutions at local, regional, national and international levels. There are currently 190 NDLTD members (160 universities, 6 consortia and 24 other institutions). ETDs have been accessed millions of times from over 100 countries since their inception in 1996. New programs and pilot projects are being implemented all over the world.

Participating students and their institutions gain because of the effective marketing and networking opportunities available through the Web. The NDLTD encourages and supports the inclusion of multimedia elements, the development and promotion of electronic graduate portfolios, and the pursuit and exploration of new authoring and research Internet venues.

ETDs are part of a growing trend of technological development that is transforming economies by providing access to research results to the world while bringing reciprocal investment to the local level. The NDLTD now hopes to encourage and assist with ETD program implementation in developing nations as a means of fostering academic growth and technological advancement. One of the broader consequences of knowledge sharing through the realization of digital libraries is the achievement of social and economic justice worldwide. Through its global outreach the NDLTD consortium is helping to achieve this noble aspiration.

Come join us at ETD 2004 and take part in the ETD (R)evolution!

[ETD 2004 Symposium](#)

June 3rd - 5th, 2004

University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, U.S.A.

Suzie Allard (ETD 2004 Conference Chair, School of Information Science, University of Tennessee)

*The 7th International Symposium on
Electronic Theses & Dissertations*

University of Kentucky

ETD
2004

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John H. Hagen

John Hagen is coordinator of the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation ([ETD](#)) program for the University Libraries at West Virginia University, where he has provided advice and assistance since 1989. He has served on the WVU ETD Task Force and helped to develop its program and policy, and he has been involved with the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations since 1998. Originally from Flint, Michigan, he studied sociology at Michigan State University where he launched his career at the MSU Libraries. He has published in the proceedings of the ETD symposia and presented at a variety of digital library and information technology conferences. His interests are in ETD implementation issues, multimedia and music/audio production and spreading the ETD gospel.



To return to John Hagen's conference report, click ([here](#)).
