

## Frequently Asked Questions on ETDs

### 1. Definitions and Introductory Information

- a. Does requiring ETDs of students already engaged in graduate studies impose deadlines too rapidly and perhaps miss the presidents' concern with a student-centered university?

Converting a word-processed thesis to an ETD is not really a very complex process. Nevertheless, as of Spring 1998 we successfully phased in the requirement which allowed case-by-case considerations and exceptions where they made sense. But you make a good point. An ETD is, in fact, an excellent example of our desire to create a student-centered enterprise: it puts the students' best work on international display and focuses attention on his or her research. One notable WVU thesis has already been downloaded over 15,000 times.

- b. I don't see an urgent deadline facing us. Lets take our time, get our procedures set up and run a few test cases to work out the bugs, and do it right.

WVU realized the vital importance of the development of digital collections, their potential for positive impact on academic research, and hence has taken on a pioneering role in the dawn of the information age. As of Spring 2003, there were over 1,600 ETDs in the WVU collection, having been accessed cumulatively over 3 million times since inception. Nor is this a new project for WVU. We are a part of SURA (Southern University Research Association), and WVU's representatives to SURA meetings on the development of digital libraries began to be briefed on the ETD project at Virginia Tech at least as long ago as the fall of 1995 in Atlanta. A meeting dedicated to the development of the project was held in Charlotte, NC, during the summer of 1996, and at that time we were invited to join Virginia Tech. (For a list of participating universities, see URL: [www.ndltd.org/join/status.htm](http://www.ndltd.org/join/status.htm). We certainly wanted to be thorough and get it right, but this was not the sort of issue which would have profited from passive study, so by 1998 we arrived at the point where we felt that implementation of the project was imperative.

### Procedures for Students and Thesis Directors

Won't dissertation directors and committees have to be carefully trained to produce ETDs?

The committee need not learn anything new for ordinary "flat" (i.e., not hyper-text nor including animations, etc.) theses. It can still read and comment on hard copy all the way through the defense. It will be incumbent upon the student to have the thesis converted and then submitted on line, existing labs such as those at Academic Computing, the Center for Literary Computing in A&S, and other presently existing places can help the student do that fairly easily. (The process is typically like feeding the final copy through a printer and filling in some online forms.) The beauty of this -- and the Virginia Tech and WVU experience bears it out -- is that there really isn't much of a learning curve for the student who wants to do a traditional thesis, and there need be none for the director and committee (although as time goes on, faculty will find themselves publishing in electronic journals more frequently, and so become conversant with the process themselves.) WVU provides some information on word processing techniques, just to be sure that students don't use courier fonts and the space-bar to manage all formatting problems (or similar typewriter techniques). For ordinary flat theses, the expected standards are pretty much the same as always, minus the concern about the rag content of the paper and with a shift to single-spaced text. For theses which exploit the abilities of the computer to do things one cannot do on paper, standards are under development (there are format standards for the components, e.g. mpegs for movie clips; jpegs for image compression, etc.) In fact, now that we're beyond implementation, we're currently encouraging our students to make use of multimedia applications in their ETDs. A student proposing such a thesis must have a committee whose

members are interested in guiding the cyber-dimensions of the project, so some committees and directors might -- in the case of particular dissertations -- need to know something of the range of techniques for putting texts online. That will not effect most of us, however.

### Procedures for Administrators and Librarians

Does this imply that the library will no longer store paper copies of theses and dissertations?

Librarians and their technologies are currently very concerned with migrating library materials as encoding become obsolete, and the standards for conversion used at WVU are not likely to become unconvertible very soon simply because they are already ubiquitous formats and their continuity is a recognized issue in library technology. Indeed, none of the conversions (PDF, SGML, XML) are "platform dependent," so that one could argue that migration is already built into them. The very business of putting thousands of theses into these formats at dozens of schools has practically guaranteed their continued maintenance. Moreover, all WVU ETDs are filed with Bell & Howell (formerly University Microfilms Inc. or UMI) in electronic form, and makes microfilm copies of them to store in their vaults, contending that microfilm is superior to modern paper, and that it has a demonstrable life-span of 500 years. All ETDs are archived in microfilm, not paper.

### Why must I submit electronically?

By preparing an ETD and submitting it electronically you learn about electronic document preparation and about digital libraries. These skills will help prepare you for your future role in the Information Age, whether you teach, research, or use the research results of others.

Furthermore, you may be able to better convey the message of your thesis or dissertation in an electronic as opposed to a paper document. Thus, you can easily have color diagrams, color images, hypertext links, and even include audio, video, animations, spreadsheets, databases, simulations, virtual reality worlds, etc. in your appendices.

By submitting electronically you also allow your university to fulfill more economically its responsibilities of recording and archiving your thesis or dissertation. This is a key responsibility of the university, that is easier and less costly (in this time of tight budgets) to fulfill when the work flow involves electronic documents.

Note that electronic submission is totally separate from electronic access. So, please realize that regardless of what is arranged in terms of access to your work, electronic submission is required, unless special circumstances arise and are accepted by the Office of Academic Affairs.

### Why is there no paper version required any longer for the University Libraries?

The University only requires electronic submission (though your committee and/or department may still want a paper version). It commits to electronic archiving of works received, making sure that these will be accessible in the future, regardless of changes in media and standards. This is a firm guarantee so you need not worry. Furthermore, paper documents can easily be produced from electronic documents, but not vice versa.

By not accepting paper, the University reduces handling and library costs, saves you money, and makes it possible for access to increase.

### How will people be able to access my ETD?

If you allow your ETD to be freely available worldwide, which we recommend (see below for reasons, and for discussion of other options), we will work to make your ETD as easily available as possible. First, we allow access over the WWW, so people can link to our collection for browsing, and even link directly to your ETD (with a special type of URL that is not subject to change). Second, in the record for your ETD will appear in the WVU Libraries MountainLynx Catalog, we will have link information, so those searching that catalog can link directly to the ETD. Third, we provide one or more search "engines" so that people can search the WVU ETD collection using "full-text" searching. Fourth, we have a mechanism so that your ETD can be found by any seeking to search the NDLTD (i.e., the full distributed collection of ETDs made available by institutions that are part of

the initiative). Fifth, we work with 3rd party organizations, such as Bell & Howell and OCLC (a not-for-profit in Dublin, Ohio that provides library cataloging and other services to libraries), to encourage them to provide access as well as archiving services.

### Why should I make my ETD freely available?

The world of scholarship depends on people making their research available to others. When that is done electronically, more people can get access at lower cost, and more knowledge transfer occurs. This can stimulate education and research. It also can ensure that many people give credit to you for your work, and that your research is cited in others' publications, which adds to your prestige and can help your future advancement. We can log all accesses and provide a report to you of the count, to pass on to your supervisors, if you request this.

Before theses and dissertations were available electronically, not many were read. Electronic access multiplies the number of times works are read by a factor of thirty or more. Since you spent a great deal of time on your research, it should encourage you to know that others are reading that work. Your literature review may guide others, and your results may save others the time of redoing your study.

With electronic theses and dissertations, students and universities can more easily share knowledge, with much lower costs. It is estimated that about 200,000 theses or dissertations are completed each year. It would greatly aid graduate education if as many as possible of these were made freely available. Since we aim to maximize access, which seems especially appropriate for a land grant university, we will not charge and so will not have any royalties to share.

### What are the options regarding electronic access?

WVU gives you three levels of electronic distribution; graduate students submitting their ETD may choose the level which fits their situation. The WVU ETD Signature Form, that must be signed by you and your committee when you turn in the your final work, indicates your choice. For more information, see the WVU ETD Policy document available in pdf at: [www.wvu.edu/~thesis/ETDpolicysummary.pdf](http://www.wvu.edu/~thesis/ETDpolicysummary.pdf)

#### 1. World Wide Distribution

The first option, recommended by the University and ETD Task Force, is to make the information freely available worldwide. It should be noted that this option may be viewed by some book or journal publishers as publishing the work. They may see a conflict with this level of distribution of the thesis or dissertation.

#### 2. WVU Only Distribution

The second option is to make the ETD freely available only to computers at WVU campuses and as requested through our University Libraries' Interlibrary Loan (ILL) Department. West Virginia University Libraries' ILL Department will provide access via electronic or paper distribution of WVU Only ETDs. This option addresses situations such as when a book or article is planned, and the book or journal publisher is concerned that prior publishing through a digital library will negatively impact on sales. WVU only distribution will continue from year to year without special notification for a period of five years after the submission date, after which time it will revert to 'World Wide Distribution'.

#### 3. Restricted Access

The third option is to embargo the thesis or dissertation. The university will determine, with guidance from the student and advisor, whether the embargo is for patent (or similar) purposes, and will so designate the ETD as "embargoed for patent/proprietary purposes." Otherwise, the ETD will be designated as "embargoed by personal request."

You should consider these options carefully. Feel free to ask WVU Intellectual Property or Legal Counsel for advice, and to discuss this with your advisor. If you intend to work with a publisher regarding journal or book publications, be sure you understand their policies and any agreements you would sign. We are happy to explain these options further,

beyond what appears below, and are actively working to document publishers' views regarding ETDs. Please note that you can help us prepare guidance for other students by forwarding your questions and comments to the ETD Task Force about student practices and plans regarding publications related to theses or dissertations.

#### **What if I want to write a book related to my thesis or dissertation?**

We realize that some students, especially in the humanities, prepare books related to their theses or dissertations. In those cases we strongly recommend that you approach likely presses, and ask for advice regarding what level of access to allow to your work.

Usually, books that relate to theses or dissertations turn out to be significantly changed as part of the editorial process. This makes it likely that those interested in your work will buy your book when it comes out, even if they have reviewed your ETD.

In some cases it appears that electronic release of early versions of a book leads to greater sales of such books. Indeed, having an electronic work made available on the Internet, and telling a publisher that there have been a large number of electronic accesses to that work, may help you land a book contract.

However, since publishers vary widely in their policies, it may be wise to share this letter and other documents about the ETD initiative with publishers to which you are likely to submit your work. For example, if they consider the market of your work to be very small, they may not want to publish it if it has been made accessible worldwide.

We are open to discussions with publishers regarding policies or helping in the publicity process (in case they do publish your work). For example, we could create a bibliography or database of ETDs and list all related articles, books, or other publications for each.

#### **When should I contact WVU about changing status of access?**

We recommend 1 year as the most suitable choice. For various reasons, the situation that exists when you first prepare your ETD may be altered with the passage of time. For example, if a book has been published, and gone out of print, and the publisher has no plans for further printing, you may change status from a restriction to campus, to allow worldwide access.

Similarly, if your ETD was held back from worldwide access because it relates closely to a journal article, and that journal article has appeared in print, the journal publisher is likely to be willing to allow you to release your ETD for worldwide access. That is, if the publisher wanted right of first publication, once widespread distribution of the journal has taken place, that publisher may give you written permission to broaden access to your ETD.

#### **How does the ETD project relate to Bell & Howell?**

Bell & Howell (formerly UMI) is a corporation in Ann Arbor, Michigan that maintains a microform archive of about 1.5 million dissertations, as well as an online service called Dissertation Abstracts. Most dissertations written in the U.S. are submitted to Bell & Howell for archiving on microfilm, from which microform or paper copies can be produced. They function as an on-demand book publisher that eliminates the editorial process. One of the services they offer is to help you regarding copyright and working with publishers.

They accept electronic submissions as well as paper submissions. The latter are scanned in and OCR'ed, but in most cases current technology does not yield as good a result as would come from an electronic submission. They have made available online electronic versions of all works they received since 1996.

Bell & Howell has a representative on the Steering Committee and on the Technical Advisory Committee for the NDLTD. More information can be found at [www.umi.com](http://www.umi.com).

The NDLTD project focuses on graduate education and raising the level of knowledge transfer. Since students may wish to read a thesis or dissertation that was prepared many years before, it is imperative that the NDLTD arrange for archiving of ETDs, so they can be accessed even when media and technology change. Bell & Howell, as well as OCLC, is interested in providing such archival services.

#### **What do I need to know about signing agreements with publishers?**

When you have your research published in a conference, book, or journal, you usually sign some type of agreement with the publisher. You should read that agreement carefully before signing, making sure you understand AND AGREE with the terms and conditions. If you don't, you may want to change the agreement in connection with discussion/negotiation with the publisher, and possibly with advice of legal or other counsel. The agreement should be explicit about what future rights of use you retain. If you want to include the materials in a dissertation or to reuse the materials for teaching or a book chapter, say so.

As the author you are entitled to discuss your plans with the publisher. We encourage you to obtain an agreement that allows you to include your research in a freely available electronic thesis or dissertation.

During these negotiations you may want to discuss matters of timing and revision. You have the right to negotiate with a publisher to reduce access to your ETD to your university only for a limited amount of time, if they request this as a condition on publishing your article. However, most publishers consider a thesis or dissertation to be quite different from a journal article. Typically the article is much shorter than the chapter or full work, has been revised as a result of the editorial process and peer review, and sometimes has several authors, resulting in many publishers having no concern regarding fully accessible ETDs.

#### **What if I want to have a journal article as a chapter in my thesis?**

If you have published an article or articles before you turn in your thesis or dissertation, and you wish credit for that for your graduate requirements, you have a number of options. These should be discussed with your committee, and possibly with your publisher. First, you can simply cite that publication in your references. Second, if the publisher has the publication online, you can link or point to it (with permission of the publisher, who usually has protection so that paying customers or subscribers are the only ones allowed access). Third, if the publisher gives you a signed release, you can include the publication in your thesis or dissertation as allowed in that release. If the publisher restricts access in that release, say to your university, you may want to have 2 versions of your thesis or dissertation—one with and one without the chapter (e.g., published article) in question.

This matter may be avoided if your thesis or dissertation talks about your research in a very different way from the published article. That often makes sense, since articles are typically short, and your thesis or dissertation may be the only place where all the details, data, tables, and other aspects of your research are made available.

Remember that preparing a thesis or dissertation is part of your graduate experience, one aim of which is to prepare you to be a part of the world of research and publication. While this letter may help make the philosophy of the ETD Initiative clearer, the ultimate success of the initiative depends on you. We hope you will treat this a part of your educational experience, and will take steps when you deal with publishers to help other students gain the widest possible access to your research.



Success Expect it

### **University Libraries**

John H. Hagen, Library Technical Consultant

P.O. Box 6069 / 1549 University Avenue

Morgantown, WV 26506-6069

(304) 293-4040, ext.

Email: [John.Hagen@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:John.Hagen@mail.wvu.edu)



# WVU ETDs

## Unlocking Access to Graduate Education

## Frequently Asked Questions Guide

**WVU Electronic Theses & Dissertations:**

[www.wvu.edu/~thesis/](http://www.wvu.edu/~thesis/)

**WVU Guide to the Preparation of Master's  
Theses & Doctoral Dissertations:**

[www.libraries.wvu.edu/theses/](http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/theses/)



**Electronic Theses and Dissertations  
University Libraries  
& ETD Task Force**