

LTC09D061

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E-theses Initiative Report - Autumn 2009

Background – E-theses Pilot Project January – April 2009

The pilot phase of this initiative invited Doctorate students to submit one electronic copy of their final, approved thesis to the UEA institutional repository via self deposit. Submission of a digital copy of the final thesis was entirely optional and in addition to current practices. The initial pilot ran from January to April 2009.

Drivers for the initiative

- Theses are now mainly born digital
- Expensive for students to print and bind hard copy of their thesis
- Expensive for the library to store and takes up large amount of space
- Ensure higher visibility of UEA PGR research locally and more widely via the Internet.
- E-theses enable both local and external searches via major search engines such as Google and Yahoo.
- British Library no longer converts theses to microfilm, they have recently launched an initiative called ETHOS which is an 'all digital' service.
- Expensive for UEA to digitise from the print as the cost for digitising theses from the print is now £45 per thesis

We received a great deal of positive support from the PGr community for the initiative with both staff and students showing a great deal of interest in making born digital theses available electronically.

Concerns regarding the initiative were noted; these concerns came primarily from Humanities staff and students and related to loss of Intellectual Property Rights and potential loss of future publishing fees if theses were made available in this way.

By the end of August 2009 12 theses had been deposited. It has been suggested by PGr Managers that a September/October pilot launch would have reached more PGr's resulting in a greater deposit.

Taking the E-theses Initiative Forward

On the recommendation of LLR Forum in May 2009, Andrew Barker, Head of Library Academic Services, attended the PGr Policy Group meeting on 26th June to provide PGr stakeholders with an update on the e-theses initiative.

At that meeting it was suggested that the lack of deposit of e-theses was partly due to deposit being optional and in addition to the usual library hard copy submission. The group continues to see the benefit of the initiative and it was suggested that if students were permitted to deposit only one hard copy of their thesis it would save them approximately £40

which would be an additional incentive to submit electronically. This was agreed and the recommendation of the PGr Policy Group is to give students the option of depositing either electronic **or** hard copy into the Library (hard copy only will continue to be the format deposited with schools).

At this meeting concerns were raised regarding intellectual property rights, although giving students the option to deposit either an electronic or hard copy would allow students to opt out of the initiative. It was agreed that further liaison with Arts and Humanities was required to ensure that a system was put in place which meets the needs of all stakeholders.

Further consultation was made with PGr Managers at their regular meeting. This group continues to be supportive of the initiative and agreed with the recommendations made by the PGr policy Group regarding the format of the Library theses.

As agreed at LLR Forum in May and PGr Policy Group in June, Andrew Barker met with HUM PGr directors at their meeting on 28th September to discuss the e-theses initiative. Directors were broadly welcoming of the new proposal at this meeting and were happy for it to move forward as proposed by the PGr Policy Group. There remained some reservations with theses being made available via the internet, but overall it was felt the proposal to be a good holding position and colleagues were appreciative of the modifications made to the scheme in response to HUM's concerns. One additional suggestion was to give the option of intranet only access to some e-theses where IPR might be an issue for publishing theses more widely via the Internet. Although this is not yet possible, it will be pursued as an option as the scheme continues.

Proposal:

After having met with UEA stakeholders and reflected on the needs of the University community, we have amended our initial recommendations for taking e-theses forward. The proposal that was agreed at LLR Forum and that we make here was for the e-theses initiative to continue and that at this stage PGr students will be permitted to deposit either an electronic or a hard copy of the library copy of their thesis.

The benefits of this proposal are:

- Students who deposit an e-thesis will save the cost of binding one copy of their thesis (c £40).
- Students who feel that depositing an e-thesis will compromise their Intellectual Property Rights will be able to choose not to engage in the e-theses initiative and can pay to have their thesis bound and deposited into the Library as a hard copy.

The decision not to deposit an e-thesis may well have an impact on the visibility of research for certain schools, but it is clear that Faculties feel that one model would not meet the disparate needs of the academic community. If, after reflection, a student who has deposited a hard copy of their thesis decides that they would now like to digitise their thesis and have it stored within the UEA repository, UEA Library would pass the £45 digitisation charge levied by the British Library on to the PGr.

Preservation of e-theses is fundamental to the success of this project; we will ensure preservation through UEA's repository software and also through membership of the British Library e-theses initiative - EThOS. Through membership of EThOS, the British Library will regularly harvest all e-theses held in UEA's repository for deposit within the EThOS repository.

The EThOS system has a robust back up regime and the British Library plans to transfer digital and digitalised theses held by EThOS to the British Library preservation store (The Digital Library); until then, the interim regime provides a secure environment for digital and digitised theses.

Andrew Barker
November 2009