

Content Management: Thesis & Dissertations

Draft

June 6, 2006

Sub-group membership

Karen Anderson, GLSP

Valerie Gillispie, Library

Susan Krajewski, Registrar

Beth Labriola, Registrar

Barbara Schukoske, Graduate Office

Anna van der Burg, Registrar

Mike Roy, ITS & Library

Domain

This group will look at theses produced by students at the undergraduate, masters, and doctoral level. We will consider the format of these documents, the ways in which they are assembled into a final document, the manner in which they are cataloged, stored, and distributed.

Existing Practices

Thesis and Dissertations are presently produced by students as printed documents. The format for these documents is determined by standards developed by the Registrar's Office. Once they are accepted by the department, the library then catalogs and stores them. Additional copies are stored in department offices.

Strengths

The present system is well-understood. The format for these works is stable and durable.

Weaknesses

The following is a list of problems with the present system:

1. The text of the physical items stored in the stacks is not searchable.
2. The items take up valuable space in the library.
3. Access is limited.
4. The present system also requires that for a period of time, the Registrar's conference room, a valuable meeting space, is unavailable as the theses are being processed.
5. Faculty complain about not being able to write comments on the submitted documents.

Opportunities

Moving to a digital storage and distribution method would improve access, would allow for the inclusion of rich media within the documents, and would save future space for other uses.

Threats

A digital solution would suffer from the usual problems of digital being unstable, with changing formats and non-archival media. There may also be copyright issues if these documents contain copyrighted materials. Certain fonts may need to be licensed in order to allow documents to be displayed properly.

Short-term Recommendations

1. Talk to non-print departments (film, dance, music) about how they approach archiving student thesis work
2. Develop proposal for a digital archive to permanently store student theses, with a goal of doing a pilot for spring 2007, and complete digital archive by spring 2008.

3. Analyze workflow in this proposal and present to faculty readers

Long Term Recommendations

1. Retrospective conversion of existing documents.
2. Linkage with other repositories for broader distribution

Readings & Links

Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations

<http://www.ndltd.org/>

UMI's Dissertation Publishing

http://www.umi.com/products_umi/dissertations/

Dissertation.com

<http://dissertation.com/>

ProQuest Digital Commons

http://www.umi.com/products_umi/digitalcommons/

Archival Issues

As noted, the present system of storing printed documents is well-understood, and only presents long-term archival issues when the thesis is printed on non-archival paper. A move to storing digital theses would result in a set of complex archival issues in order to assure long-term availability of these materials.