



TxETDA/USSETDA Region 3 2015 Joint Conference

Pre-Conference Workshop ETD Program Implementation: An Overview

Guide to Access Levels and Embargoes of ETDs

This handout provides an overview of the issues discussed in Chapter 2 of the publication *Guidance Documents for Lifecycle Management of ETDs*. (<http://educopia.org/publications/gdlmetd>) For details, we highly recommend reading this chapter as well as the resources listed in the bibliography, which we have also included with this handout.

As institutions have moved from print-based theses and dissertations to ETDs, researchers (faculty and students) have expressed more concern over access to these documents. Consequently, when starting an ETD program, one of the most important policies to address is the institution's policy on access restrictions for ETDs. Primary stakeholders should be considered and in some instances brought into the conversation: graduate school personnel, librarians, faculty, researchers, graduate students, and others. Each institution should establish reasonable access policies that will result in consistent approaches and best practices for enabling access to ETDs.

Discovery

- Internet search engines (Google, Google Scholarly, Bing, etc.)
- Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD)
<http://ndltd.vtls.com/>
- Library catalogs, including WorldCat
- Discovery services (EBSCO Discovery System, ExLibris Primo, ProQuest Summon)
- ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database

Types of Access Restrictions

- Embargo – all or a portion of a thesis is not available for a specified period of time (publication delay)
- Redaction – masking or blocking out parts of information in a thesis that cannot be released
- Campus-only access – the thesis is available to those physically located on the campus or those who can use campus credentials to obtain authenticated off-campus access

Common Reasons for Access Restrictions

- Publishing concerns
 - Issues with conducting fair, blind review
 - Issue that libraries won't acquire books derived from openly accessible theses
 - Some publishers look at high usage of thesis as harbinger of publication potential
 - Publisher policies/practices still ambiguous
- Research usage/plagiarism concerns
- Sensitivity of data and/or sponsor restrictions
- Creative works (fiction, poetry, plays, musical compositions, etc.)
- Patents
- Export controls
 - More common in science/engineering
 - US export control laws designed to protect national security/foreign policy objectives



Common Reasons for Access Restrictions (continued)

- Others
 - Ethical concerns
 - Polemic concerns
 - Potentially offensive content
 - Legitimate reasons to restrict all information about an individual

Arguments Against Access Restrictions

- Open access enables full text indexing
 - Research more easily discovered
 - Increased visibility for author, advisors, funders, institutions
 - Increased citations/demonstrated use of the thesis;
 - Increased opportunities for collaborative research
 - Increased potential of attracting people and funding opportunities to programs that align with the institution's strengths
 - Prevention of performing research that has already been done
 - Plagiarism more easily detected
- Institution mandates for open access to research

Access Policies

- Ideally consistent policies across institution/campuses
- Policy(ies) readily available/accessible
- Key issues with access restriction decisions
 - Costs and benefits associated with access restrictions
 - Which restrictions, if any, are possible
 - Processes to follow in requesting restrictions
 - Responsibilities associated with embargo renewals
- Who determines/approves the restriction requests
- What is restricted, the metadata and the full text or just access to the full text
- Full embargo preferred over redactions
- Renewable restriction periods
- Institutional management of restricted access
 - Notification of upcoming access restriction expiration date or no notification
 - Release after access restriction has expired
 - Preservation of theses under access restriction
 - Requests to access restricted theses

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