

# Pushing the Boundaries of Open Access

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## Introduction

The University of North Texas (UNT) has one of the longest running electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) programs in the US – requiring ETDs for graduation since fall 1999. The UNT Libraries have put forth great effort in bringing UNT’s scholarship to the widest possible audience globally.

Year	Open (Public)	Restricted (UNT-Community)	Total
2013	215	011	226*
2012	370	034	404
2011	399	021	420
2010	339	027	366
2009	289	022	311
2008	331	005	336
2007	349	-	349
2006	213	113	326
2005	200	084	284
2004	206	098	304
2003	236	092	328
2002	221	077	298
2001	190	100	290
2000	210	105	315
1999	071	049	120
<b>Total</b>	<b>3839 (82%)</b>	<b>838 (18%)</b>	<b>4677</b>

Figure-1 Total Number of UNT’s Opened and Embargoed ETDs

## UNT’s ETDs Embargo Policies

As can be seen from Table-1, about 18% of UNT’s ETDs have some kind of restrictions. Since ETDs inception at UNT, there have been three different conditions of embargoes:

- **From 1999 to 2006:** Student can restrict his/her ETD indefinitely (without expiration date) at his/her own discretion (no justification required).
  - 718 (32%) restricted ETDs
- **From 2007 to 2010:** Student needs to request and justify restriction. Requests are approved by Graduate School Dean on case-by-case basis.
  - 54 (4%) restricted ETDs
- **From 2011 to present:** Student’s major professor approves an embargo (5 year limit) with a one time 2-year possible extension at discretion of student
  - 66 (6%) restricted ETDs

## Project Background

In a recent study, Kleister, Alemneh, and Short (2013) analyzed the UNT restricted ETDs and compared their availability in the ProQuest (PQ) database from ETD program inception (fall 1999) to fall 2012. As can be seen from Figure-2, early on very few students restricted in both places. But when UNT began requiring justification, almost all UNT ETDs were also restricted in PQ.

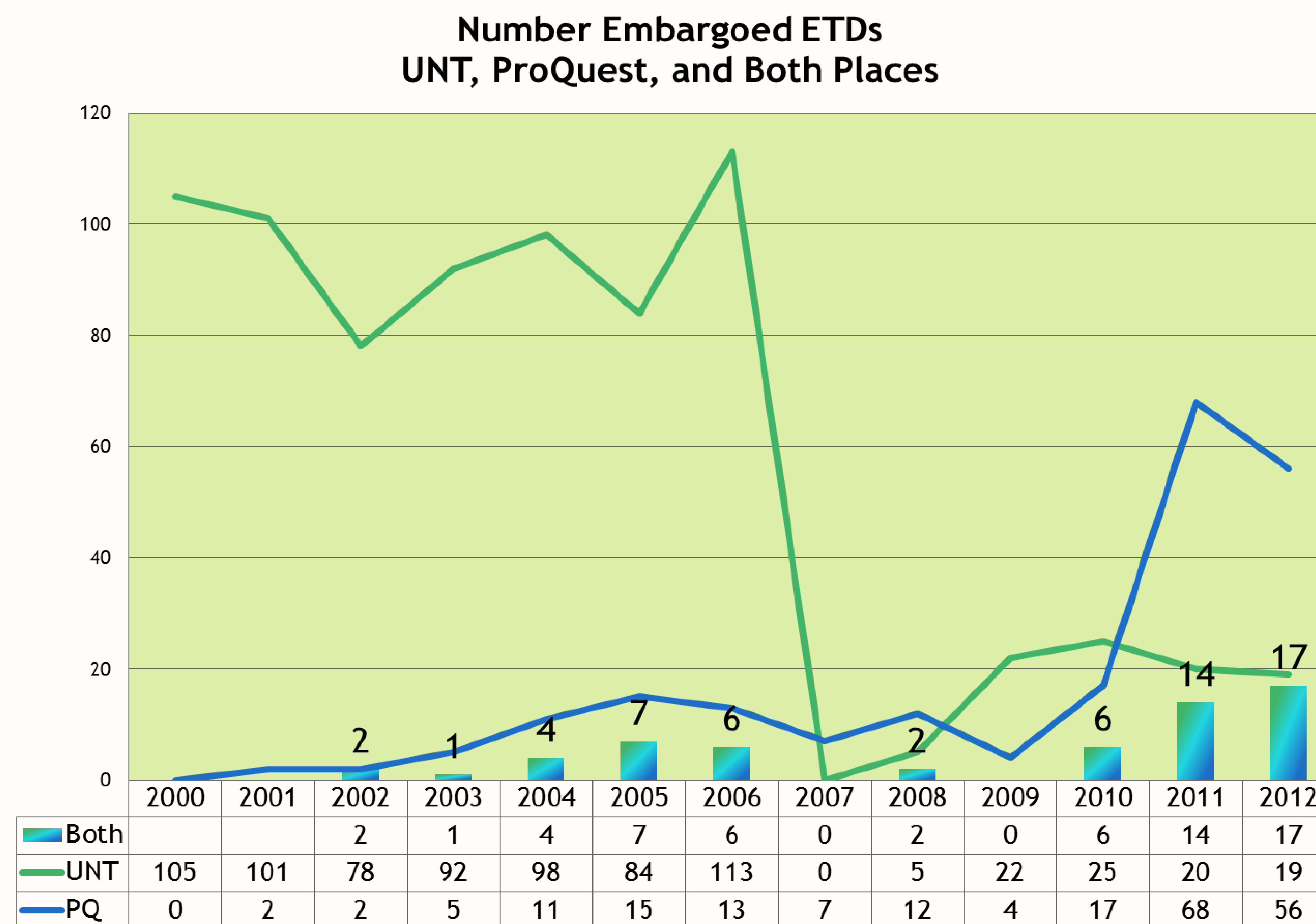


Figure-2 Comparison of ETDs embargoed at UNT and/or ProQuest

The result of the study and further analysis of existing data provided evidence of WHO restricted and under WHAT conditions. This prompted us to contact 1999-2006 students who restricted their ETDs without time limit, asking them to consider removing their indefinite embargoes. In the first phase of our project, we received 125 responses across all disciplines and years of graduation (see Figure-3).

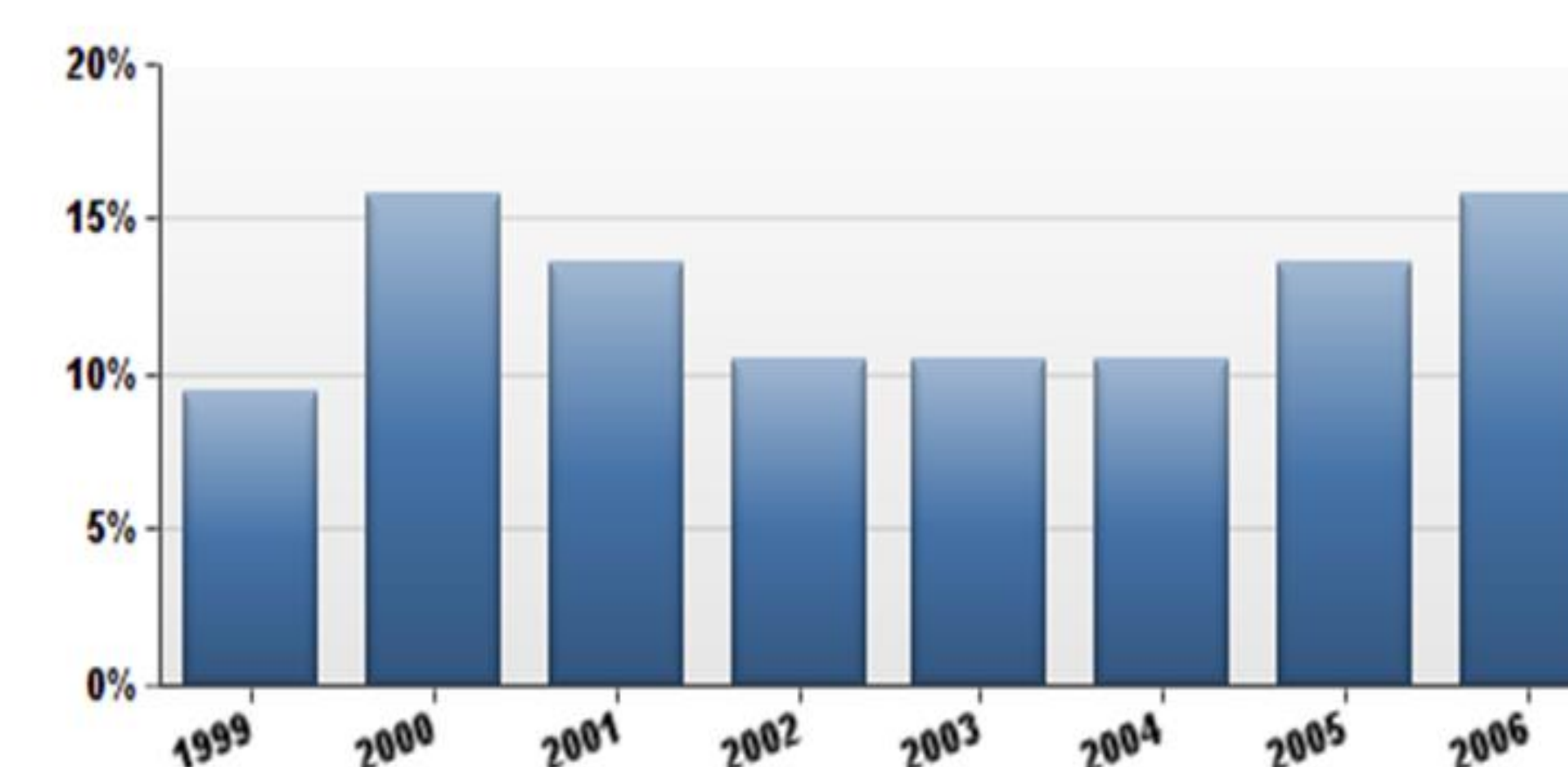


Figure-3 Number of respondents by years of graduation

## Summary

As can be seen from Figure-4, out of 125 respondents so far:

- 79% gave permission to remove restriction.
- 19% said no.
- 2% said need more information before they decide.

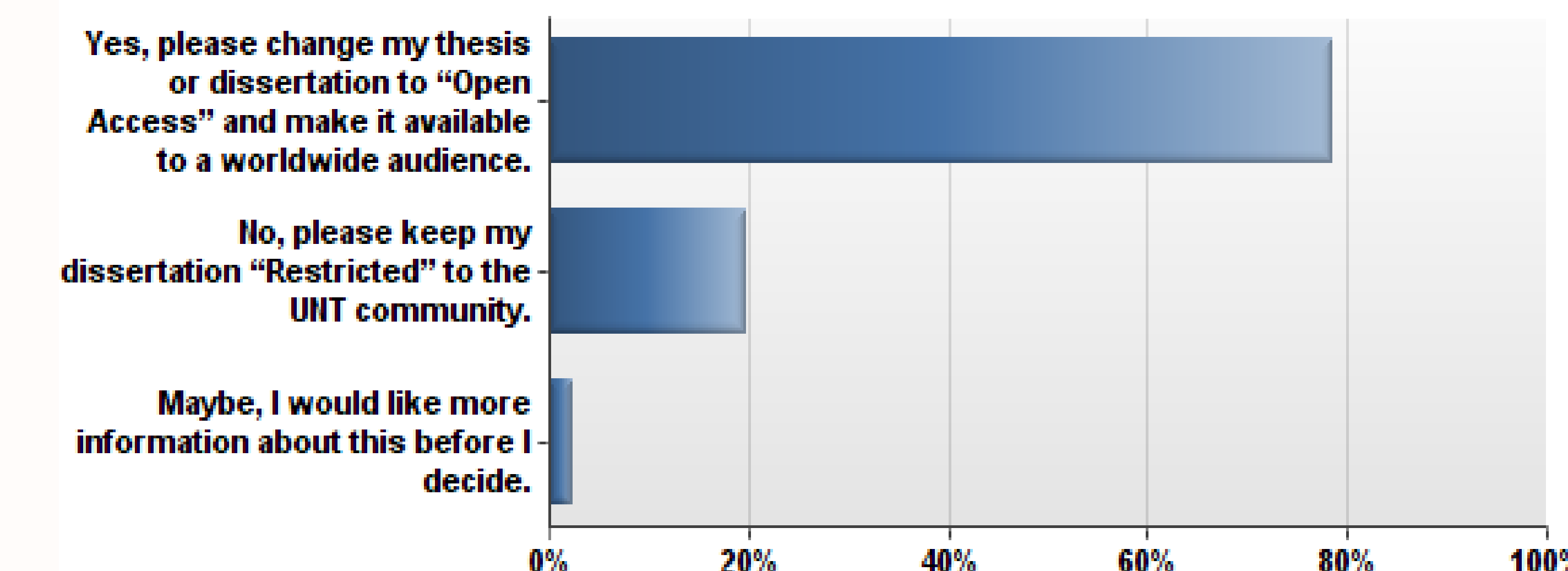


Figure-4 Summary of Responses

## Conclusion

Prior to 2007, students embargoed their ETDs indefinitely with no justification. We believe that most of them did not understand the implication of their actions. The overwhelmingly positive (80%) “Please Open it” responses also confirm our belief. If not for our project, their ETDs would remain embargoed in perpetuity, long after their usefulness was past.

Making ETDs Open also facilitates successful management of ETDs across the entire life-cycle to ensure their preservation and continuous availability in a manner that current and future users expect. We will leave you with the same question that Dr. Sandra Terrell, former UNT Graduate School Dean, asked during her keynote at the 2011 TxETDA Conference: **What “bricks” are being laid today that will need to be reversed tomorrow?**

## References

- Kleister, J; Alemneh, D. & Short, D. (2013). Riding the Restriction Wave at the University of North Texas: Comparing IR and ProQuest Embargoes. Presentation at the third annual USETDA-13 Conference, Claremont, California. <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc179682/>. Accessed on April 24, 2014.
- Terrell, S. (2011). Reversing the Bricks: The Evolution of ETDs at UNT. Keynote at TxETDA-11 Conference, Arlington, Texas. <http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc32968/>. Accessed on April 24, 2014.