

Do ETDs deter publishers?

Coverage from the 4th international symposium on ETDs

by Gail McMillan

A continuing topic of discussion in the Electronic Theses and Dissertation (ETD) community, involving Graduate School administrators, research faculty, and librarians, is whether publishers and editors of scholarly journals view theses and dissertations readily available on the Internet and through convenient Web browsers, as prior publications.

At ETDs 2001 conference¹, the results of a survey of journal publishers and editors was followed by a panel presentation by publishers' representatives and a lively discussion involving the audience and the presenters.

Using the Web survey, initially developed by Joan Dalton (University of Windsor) and reported on at ETDs 2000, Nan Seamans (Virginia Tech) surveyed editors and publishers of science and technology studies (STS) journals. She chose this contingency because graduate students in the STS program at Virginia Tech have been very vocal about ETDs, since they became aware of the requirement in 1997.

An STS student, querying her faculty and fellow graduate students, compiled a list of journals they would consider for submission of articles and monographs. Seamans contacted those publishers and journal editors about her survey by e-mail.²

The majority of Seamans' respondents were nonprofit publishers and reported that they had some kind of policy on prior publi-

cation and simultaneous submission. The majority did not, however, have a policy that referred to work that may have also been electronically accessible on the Web. Why didn't they have a policy? Because manuscripts are handled on an individual basis, existing policy applied to Web-based publications by implication, or editorial policy had not been set.

Publishers' views on "prior publication"

Seamans received completed surveys or e-mail responses from 55% of the 141 journal publishers contacted. Only 15 of the survey respondents (18%) said that according to their editorial policy, ETDs constitute prior publication (slightly fewer than Dalton's 14%). Therefore, the problem is not so large as many seem to feel it is.

Ninety-four percent (94%) of Dalton's respondents stated that their journals had policies on prior publication explicitly stated in "Guidelines to Contributors." However, 68% of the 1999 survey respondents stated that these policies did not specifically refer to works that were posted on the Web or made available electronically. Fourteen percent of those surveyed stated that they would not publish works derived from ETDs. With 86% potentially accepting articles submitted from

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ETDs, she concluded that there is more a perception of a problem than actual evidence of a problem.

The publishers panel

Following Seamans' presentation, the publishers panel presented publication policies with particular regard to ETDs. Representatives from Elsevier Science and Academic Press generated a lively discussion among the audience of 30.

Keith Jones (Elsevier) stated emphatically that his company encourages its authors to link their articles in Elsevier journals to their personal Web sites and authorizes their departments to provide such links. Jones reported that Elsevier understands the importance of getting new authors, such as graduate students, to publish in Elsevier journals early in their careers because they are then likely to continue to publish there. He pointed out that publishing in an Elsevier journal is an important source of validation for academics so that the subsequent availability of those articles from other nonprofit and educational sources is not a threat.

The audience learned from John Elliott (Academic Press) that this publisher has a similarly liberal policy, which allows authors to link their articles to their personal Web sites even though the authors assigned copyright to the publisher. Coincidentally, Elsevier Science may acquire Academic Press (i.e., Harcourt Brace) in the near future. Elliott also pointed out that the peer review that journal articles receive is not the same sort of review that ETDs get.

Questions and comments from the audience included discussions of university press policies and a plea from BioMed Central to abandon overpriced academic journals for the new breed of online scholarly communications.

Notes

1. Handouts from the symposium are available at <http://library.caltech.edu/etd/>.
2. Survey results are available at <http://lumiere.lib.vt.edu/surveys/results/>.

ETDs not a deterrent to publication

In a survey administered at the end of the ETD submission process, the majority of graduate student authors at Virginia Tech reported that the decision to limit access to their ETDs was based on advice from their faculty advisors.

John Eaton, Virginia Tech Graduate School, surveyed graduate student alumni (in 1998 and 1999) about publishing articles derived from their ETDs. He found that 100% of those who had successfully published did not have problems getting published because their theses or dissertations were online and readily available on the Internet.

Therefore, in looking at the results of the Dalton and Seaman surveys in combination with Virginia Tech's surveys of graduate student alumni, the ready availability of ETDs on the Internet does not deter the vast majority of publishers from publishing articles derived from graduate research already available on the Internet. ■

(“Strategic . . .” continued from page 618)

Let us all strive to be cosmopolitans as we look forward, envision new possibilities, and embrace a variety of mutually beneficial strategic partnerships on behalf of our libraries.

Notes

1. Peter F. Drucker, *Management Challenges for the 21st Century* (New York: Harper Business, 1999), 183.
2. Hannelore B. Rader, “A New Academic Library Model: Partnerships for Learning and Teaching,” *C&RL News* 62, no. 4 (April 2001): 393–96.

3. Gail R. Gilbert, “Courting Athletics, Creating Partnerships,” *Library Administration & Management* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2000), 35–37.

4. Melba Jesudason, “Outreach to Student-Athletes Through E-Mail Reference Service,” *Reference Services Review* 28, no. 3 (2000), 262–67.

5. Nancy Allen and Liz Bishoff, “Academic Library/Museum Collaboration: I’m OK, You’re OK,” *Proceedings of the ACRL 10th National Conference*, March 15–18, 2001 (Chicago: ACRL, 2001), 59–69.

6. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, “World Class Leaders” *The Leader of the Future* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1996), 91. ■

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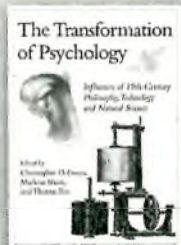
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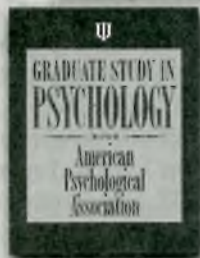
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