

## Electronic Publication of Theses and Dissertations

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*Starting in 2010, master's theses and doctoral dissertations produced by University of Utah graduate students will be published openly in digital form and made available widely, most often as PDF files. Here, we describe our current publication practices, some of the things that will change, and some that will remain the same.*

### Current Practice

For many years, the university has required its doctoral students to print and publish their dissertations. After a dissertation has been approved for release by the Graduate School thesis editors and the student has been approved for graduation, the university sends one copy of the manuscript to ProQuest UMI, which photographs the document, stores it as images on microfiche, and makes copies available for sale to the public. Users can search the ProQuest UMI database for dissertations of interest, and students may receive a small royalty based on sales of their dissertations.

### Future Changes

While the basic practice of publishing doctoral dissertations will remain the same, the university will implement a few important changes. Some of these are subtle, while others are profound.

1. In addition to doctoral dissertations, the university will now begin to publish the theses produced by students earning master's degrees.
2. Instead of publishing the documents as copies of page images, the theses and dissertations will be archived and distributed as digital documents, usually in portable document file (PDF) format with searchable text.
3. Students will no longer be required to submit three paper copies of their theses and dissertations to the university. Documents will be submitted to the Graduate School through the ProQuest UMI web site in electronic form. The process of editing and approval will be essentially paperless.
4. The university reached an agreement with ProQuest UMI that allows the university to publish the theses and dissertations openly as digital documents in its institutional repository, where they will be available to both the University community and the general public.
5. Printed and bound copies of theses and dissertations can be produced at modest cost in the library using the Espresso Book Machine. The library will also produce one physical copy of each thesis or dissertation in this way for the University Archives.

### Financial Implications

The best news is that the cost to students will be lowered. In the past, students have been required to submit paper copies of their documents to the Thesis Office for editing, as well as three bound copies of the final version printed on archival paper. Now students will no longer be required to pay for paper or binding. Neither the Graduate School nor the

Marriott Library will collect any fees, and the total required out-of-pocket cost to the student is limited to the fee paid to ProQuest UMI for publication, which is about \$55.

### **Implications of Digital Publication**

In the past, publication of doctoral dissertations has been somewhat “under the radar” in the sense that distribution was slow and limited to a relatively small number of copies sold by ProQuest UMI. Much wider distribution of the material contained in dissertations occurred whenever the content was republished as books, book chapters, or peer-reviewed articles, often in collaboration with faculty supervisors.

The new publication of searchable digital documents means that material will be much easier to find through conventional search engines like Google and Yahoo. Experience with this type of publication is limited at this stage, but it would be wrong to assume that material published in a theses or dissertation will remain accessible to only to a limited audience. In principle, the entire contents of any theses or dissertation will be available immediately. Although it may appear that a thesis may be lost in a digital sea of other information, search engines like Google are exceptionally good at organizing information so that any published thesis or dissertation can be found through persistent searching and downloading.

Although the Graduate School has always been careful to ensure that inclusion of copyrighted works in theses and dissertations has been done with the permission of the copyright owner (often a professional journal), the timing of publication has rarely been an issue. Because electronic publication can make a copyrighted work widely available in a short period of time, the university and ProQuest UMI have created an option for students to delay publication of a thesis or dissertation by 6 months in order to allow publication in a peer-reviewed journal to occur first. Embargo of a thesis or dissertation for more than 6 months will require the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

### **Publication in the Institutional Repository**

The University of Utah has the long-standing practice of making the theses and dissertations of its students available to the public through the University Libraries. With the rapid growth in utilization of digital library resources, we will now be making these materials available to the university community and the public through USpace, the Marriott Library’s institutional digital repository. Although all theses and dissertations will be available here (after any embargo period) without charge, we believe that ProQuest UMI will remain a primary source for the public to find and purchase theses and dissertations because of the size of their collection and the functionality of their search function.

### **Printing and Binding**

The Marriott Library has purchased an Espresso Book Machine, which can print and bind a paperback copy of a 300-page digital book in roughly five minutes. Students are invited to use this device to create bound copies of their theses and dissertations for their personal use. The library will also create a bound copy of each thesis and dissertation for the University Archives at its own expense.