Beyond Access: The Added Value of Electronic Thesis Implementation

Marisa Ramirez, Digital Repository Librarian, California Polytechnic State University

Background

In Fall 2008, the Robert E. Kennedy Library at California Polytechnic State University (San Luis Obispo) transitioned from collecting paper to electronic theses. Key administration and library staff were consulted to determine the impact on resources, workflows and procedures. Campus partners included the Research & Graduate Programs Office and the Graduate Coordinators from the colleges.

Stakeholders

Utilizing contextual inquiry (one-on-one observations of work practice), campus partners, library leadership and staff provided insight into the existing thesis submission workflow. A collaborative electronic thesis pilot between the Library and the Research and Graduate Programs Office brought to light technical and procedural issues requiring further attention.

Implementation

A final ETD implementation plan provided specific workflow and recommendations. Using Berkeley Electronic Press' repository software, a submission and management framework was developed for electronic thesis submission. The Library and the Research and Graduate Programs Office revised policies, procedures and websites to include new submission guidelines and forms.

Implementation Benefits

For Students

- Elimination of out-of-pocket costs for binding and paper
- Increased transparency of the submission process
- Exposure to electronic publishing issues including copyright and embargos
- Greater visibility, discoverability and use of content

For Campus Partners

- Increased thesis formatting compliance and faster turnaround for degree-posting
- New opportunities for outreach and collaboration with faculty & campus units
- Strengthened connections with new alumni
- Institutional showcase of graduate scholarship

For Library

- Efficiencies realized in internal and external workloads, workflows, roles and responsibilities
- Collaborative ties strengthened with university research and administrative groups
- Opportunity to extend awareness of copyright and scholarly communication issues

Additional Resources

Dorman, David. "Exploring the Success and Failures of UIUC Digital Libraries." Computers in Libraries 18.6 (1998), 16-18.

Fyffe, Richard and Welburn, William C. "ETDs, scholarly communication and campus collaboration." College and Research Libraries News 69.3 (2008):152-155.

Hall, Susan. "Electronic Theses and Dissertations: Enhancing Scholarly Communication and the Graduate Student Experience." Science and Technology Libraries 22.3 (2002): 51-58.

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http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu