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Culture Change

What are e-theses?

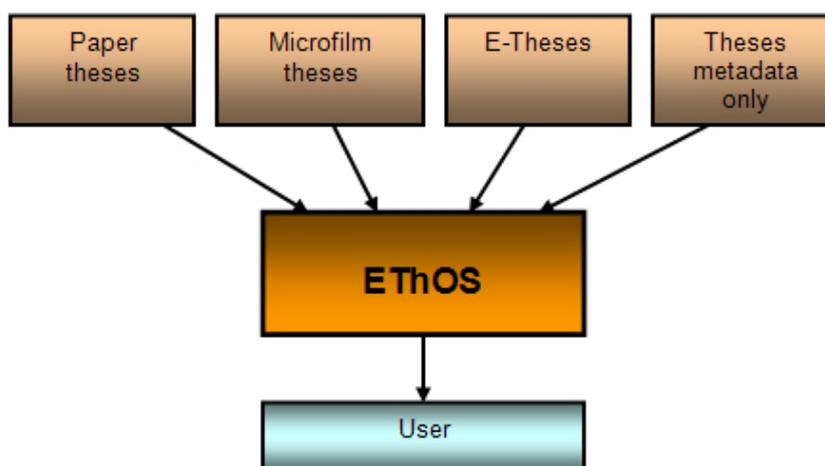
An e-thesis can take a variety of forms. At the simplest level it may be an electronic version of a printed thesis. This may be an old document that has been scanned and converted into PDF. Alternatively, it could be a recently completed piece of work produced and archived in Word or in PDF in order to be made available on the Web.

E-theses allow students to express their research results in creative and flexible ways that would not be possible if they were limited to paper based output. 'Born digital' theses may include audio and visual material and may not even be read in a traditional linear format. Such theses, incorporating multimedia as an integral part of the work, may not have a paper equivalent.

Many universities limit their digital collections to doctoral theses or dissertations (PhD or DPhil) and theses completed in fulfilment of a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degree. However, individual institutions may choose to include output from other degree courses or to include theses alongside other material within an institutional repository.

There is some variation between countries in the use of terminology to refer to theses and dissertations. Some universities refer to doctoral theses and some to doctoral dissertations. The term 'Electronic Theses and Dissertations' or 'ETDs' accommodates these differences and is in common usage internationally.

What is 'EThOS'?



Input and Output for the Electronic Theses Online Service

EThOS is the Electronic Theses Online System which allows individuals to find, access and archive e-theses that are produced in UK Higher Education institutions. For this purpose a UK database of theses is being established at a 'Central Hub' at the British

Library.

For many years, the British Library provided copies of UK theses in paper or microfilm format. It is now in the process of updating this service to make theses available in electronic format. EThOS provides a means of accessing e-Theses direct from the British Library or from institutional repositories across the UK via the British Library service at no cost to the user.

Institutions can submit their e-theses metadata, or full content, directly to the EThOS central hub repository. Alternatively, EThOS will harvest the metadata (or full

content) of e-theses from institutional repositories. EThOS also provides an opportunity to make use of its cost-effective digitisation service to have older material, or recently produced paper theses, converted into electronic format. This Web-based service will replace the British Library's process of supplying microfilm copies of theses on inter-library loan.

Terminology

Definition

An e-thesis is the intellectual content of a thesis stored and made available electronically whether the thesis was originally sourced in electronic form or digitised from a physical original.

Metadata standards

Any metadata supplied with a thesis for inclusion in the EThOS central hub must meet at least the minimum UKETD_DC standards i.e. contain all of the mandatory fields and be supplied in the specified format. This standardisation of theses metadata is intended to maximize the efficiency and consistency of searching across the collection. It will allow researchers the best opportunity of finding relevant theses.

Researcher access

Researchers are defined as individuals (or institutions) who use EThOS to access the e-theses. Researchers do not need to be registered with the system to access the EThOS central hub database. However, they do need to have registered to be able to order theses. Registration is 'light' i.e. the minimum information is requested to allow the researcher to use the system with maximum efficiency.

On-demand digitisation

EThOS allows a researcher to select a thesis for supply even if the work is not held in electronic form by the system. The EThOS infrastructure will allow the 'on-demand' digitisation of a paper or microfilm thesis and subsequent delivery of the content to the researcher in the chosen format.

Open access

All theses supplied to the EThOS central hub in electronic format and with associated metadata which meets the UKETD_DC standard, will be offered to researchers for free downloading. In addition, each HEI participating in the service will be given the option to offer their paper and microfilmed theses on Open Access by funding the digitisation process on a per thesis basis. Once a thesis has been digitised, all subsequent access to the electronic version of that thesis will be free.

Cost-recovery

EThOS operates on a cost-recovery basis i.e. all charges made to HEIs and/or researchers are fed back into the service to fund support services and to improve the overall service.

Added Value services

Several Added Value services are offered by EThOS. Added Value services are services which the EThOS support staff offer to researchers for which researchers are charged. Added Value services include the preparation of theses for delivery on physical media (i.e. loose-leaf paper, soft-bound paper, hard-bound paper, CD or DVD). Charges are made for this because these functions are optional for the researcher and they involve additional work. (Where an HEI supports Open Access via EThOS, the researcher can download the thesis free of charge and print/prepare it

him/herself.) All revenues from Added Value services are fed back into the system and used to support EThOS.

Theses from source to supply

Theses are currently stored in 3 possible locations and in 3 formats:

1. E-born theses are submitted to the HEI in electronic format and supplied to EThOS and on to the researcher.
2. Paper theses are stored at the host HEI and can be submitted to EThOS for digitisation, storage and supply to the researcher.
3. Microfilm versions of theses are held at the British Library and have been generated as part of the service offered in the past by the British Library. The paper originals of these theses are held at the host institutions. The microfilmed theses can be digitised, stored and supplied to the researcher.

Who benefits from e-theses?

An increasing number of Higher Education institutions throughout the world are now encouraging, or requiring, students to submit theses and dissertations in electronic format. Ease of access to the information contained within e-theses, and increased levels of use of e-theses, is helping to improve scholarly communication internationally and helping to publicise the work of individual researchers.

The provision of theses and dissertations in electronic format has significant advantages for students, university staff, and institutions as a whole.

Benefits for students

- Students' theses are likely to be read more widely if they are easily accessible via the Web.
- The process of producing an e-thesis for publication on the Web will require students to learn about copyright and IPR issues that will be of benefit to them in their future careers.
- The opportunity to create a thesis in electronic format allows a student to express his/her research results in creative and flexible ways.
- The production of an e-thesis is a cost effective alternative to printing and binding a large number of paper copies.

Benefits for academic staff/researchers

- Researchers are able to access e-theses on the Web as soon as they are required.
- E-theses can be accessed at any time.
- E-theses can be accessed speedily from remote locations.
- A researcher can obtain access to an e-thesis regardless of the number of other academics using the same material at the same time.
- Researchers can undertake full content searches of e-theses on the Web, without having to judge from an abstract whether it is worth requesting a copy of the full text of a hard-copy thesis on inter-library loan.
- Researchers can use the possibilities offered by e-theses to motivate students and encourage them to think of the diverse ways in which their research results can be expressed.
- Increased use of e-theses leads to increased publicity for supervisors as well as students.

Benefits for institutions

- Access to the research output of staff and students is improved through the availability of e-theses on the web.
- An increase in the level of use of such material is of significant benefit to the institution in terms of promoting its research profile.

Benefits for libraries

- Shelf and storage space is saved.
- Staff time is saved when there is no longer any need to retrieve and re-shelve paper theses.
- The number of inter-library loan requests received is likely to be reduced.
- Electronic access to the content of theses reduces the need for library staff to photocopy pages of text in order to satisfy requests from external users.
- The collection of usage statistics is easier.
- An improvement to the service is likely to lead to an improved level of customer satisfaction.

Benefits for all

- The British Library will undertake to preserve e-theses held by the central hub, as described in the [Digital Preservation Statement for UK Theses Digitisation Project / EThOS](#)

Acquiring content

In order to obtain theses in electronic format for inclusion in EThOS, a number of actions need to be taken:

1. [University regulations](#) need to be changed to make electronic deposit voluntary or, preferably, mandatory.
2. Changes to the regulations need to be well publicised to both students and supervisors.
3. Those responsible for the institutional repository and for liaison with the British Library need to "chase" missing material until new deposit procedures become routine.
4. Students and supervisors need to be enthused by the concept of e-theses so the need to spend time on advocacy work reduces in time.

In order to have paper theses digitised and included in EThOS, a number of actions need to be taken:

1. Estimate how many theses are likely to be produced in paper in future and how many of these could be digitised and made available on the Web.
2. Identify the criteria to be used to select theses for [retrospective digitisation](#).
3. In view of the above quantities, choose whether to join EThOS as an [Open Access Member](#) or as an [Associate Member](#). Secure funding to cover the cost of this work (over a three year period initially).
4. Ensure that necessary funding is made available to participate fully in EThOS (e.g. by making use of former inter-library loan budgets for theses).

What impact do e-theses have?

Statistics from universities that make e-theses available on the Web indicate that there is a significant increase in the volume of use of this category of research output once it is provided in electronic format.

For example, statistics from Virginia Polytechnic and State University (Virginia Tech.) and West Virginia University in the USA reveal a very high level of use of their Web-based electronic theses and dissertations. An analysis of the accesses from U.S. domains reveals that use of these e-Theses is not limited to educational establishments: government, military, commercial and voluntary organisations are represented amongst the users. The statistics also reveal a high level of international accesses, revealing a degree of worldwide interest that was not so easily achieved before the theses and dissertations were available on the Web.

[ETD Usage Statistics at Virginia Tech](#)

E-theses in UK HE: Best practice

In June 2010 UCL Library Services conducted a sector-wide survey into thesis deposit and open access in UK universities and HEIs. A survey summary report, full text responses and case studies are available on the [project website](#). This work formed part of the 'Influencing the Deposit of Electronic Theses in UK HE' project, commissioned by the JISC and led by UCL.

A rich body of data was provided by respondents describing how they approach the issues surrounding open access deposit of electronic theses. The data was analysed and evidence presented of consensus and best practice on the following topics:

- [Impact on future publication](#)
- [Third party copyright](#)
- [Plagiarism](#)
- [Sensitive content](#)
- [Managing embargos](#)
- [Workflows](#)
- [Collected Policies](#)

Further Information

Projects

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Literature

As interest in the development of institutional repositories and access to e-theses on the Web increases, more literature is becoming available on the subject. For detailed background information, the following may prove useful:

- o ['Electronic Theses and Dissertations: A Bibliography'](#) by Charles Bailey
- o ['Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography'](#) by Charles Bailey
- o [UNESCO Guide to Electronic Theses and Dissertations](#)
- o Fox, E., et al (eds). 'Electronic Theses and Dissertations: A Sourcebook for Educators, Students and Librarians' (New York: Marcel Dekker, 2004).
- o [JISC FAIR Programme Synthesis](#)
- o The ['Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations'](#)

- Annual International Symposium on Electronic Theses and Dissertations (eg. [ETD 2007](#), [ETD 2006](#), [ETD 2005](#))
- A '[Select List of Institutional Repositories](#)' available on the SPARC Web pages
- [Registry of Open Access Repositories \(ROAR\)](#)
- [The Directory of Open Access Repositories](#)

Examples

- [Cranfield CERES](#)
- [Edinburgh Research Archive \(ERA\)](#)

Flowcharts

- The [EThOS stakeholder chart](#) shows the role of different stakeholders who are involved in the workflow for setting up an e-theses repository and participating in EThOS.