

To: Graduate and Professional Studies Council

From: Policy Subcommittee

Re: Recommendation for GPSC 5317 Electronic theses and dissertations.

Date: February 22, 2006

Recommendation:

The Graduate Policies Committee recommends the following pilot procedures for developing electronic theses and dissertations for the University of Houston. With approval of this pilot process the task force would be formed and begin their work during the summer of 2006 with the first pilot of electronic theses and dissertations to begin at the end of fall 2006 academic semester. A report would be given back to the GPSC in the fall 2006 before the first phase of the electronic submissions with an update report following the submissions at the end of fall 2006 semester. As the scope is enlarged with additional colleges, a report would be given back to GPSC in terms of the progress and changes. When the pilot process is complete the task force would submit a request to GPSC for final approval of the university-wide electronic process, procedures and appropriate policies. The pilot process is detailed below:

- The University of Houston begins accepting theses and dissertations in electronic form on a pilot basis, initially limited in scope to one or a small number of colleges and limited to one electronic format: Adobe PDF. Normal submission of print copies of theses and dissertations by all graduate students continues during the pilot project.
- University Libraries will support and provide access to a permanent electronic archive of theses and dissertations, thereby maintaining the University's copy of record.
- A task force be formed comprised of representatives from the college(s) involved in the pilot program, the Libraries, and the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies to develop submission procedures that will meet the needs of each constituency.
- The task force conducts a thorough assessment of its experience with electronic submission, archiving, and access each semester in order to refine the process and determine when it is feasible to adopt electronic submission on a university-wide basis. If the Graduate and Professional Studies Council identifies colleges or departments with significantly different thesis/dissertation requirements that are

likely to require alternative policies or procedures for electronic submission, these colleges or departments should be brought into the pilot project prior to university-wide rollout.

- Once the university-wide electronic submission has been established and implemented, students submit theses and dissertations in both print and electronic format until the Graduate and Professional Studies Council recommends electronic-only submission and suggests any needed changes in policies and procedures to support it. Under existing procedures, the student pays for paper and binding costs as well as the fee required for submitting the thesis or dissertation to ProQuest/UMI for archival microfilming and indexing in Digital Dissertations (currently \$55 for doctoral dissertations, \$45 for masters' theses). Given these costs to the student and the difficulty of storing theses and dissertations in print form, this committee recommends a transition to electronic-only submission, archiving, and access at the earliest reasonable opportunity.

Issues for Further Discussion in the future:

- **Archive**
 - Facilities for a simple online archive exist within the Libraries today; prototype development of a more full-featured repository harvestable by search engines and other web services will commence in early 2006. If this software can be developed in a relatively timely manner (i.e., ready to accept theses and dissertations on a pilot basis by the end of 2006), it would be best for the task force to conduct its pilot project using this software directly rather than crafting interim procedures and changing them a short while later.
- **Formats**
 - If Adobe PDF is the required format for submission, the University will need to ensure that conversion software is available and supported in student computing centers across campus for students to create their PDF files. The task force may want to test and recommend software: Acrobat (campus IT has a site license; \$29), a similar, commercial product (e.g., PDF Converter), or freeware (e.g., pdf995; contains advertisements).
 - The Libraries consider the use of designated repository software to be a prerequisite for the introduction of more varied file types. In the interest of long-term preservation, file types in the archive should be kept to a minimum, while still allowing students to capitalize on the strengths of the electronic medium. The list of secondary file types for still images, moving images, and audio accepted by ProQuest (see Guidelines for Dissertations in Digital Format, <http://www.umi.com/umi/dissertations/submittinggrad.shtml#submit>) provides a useful starting point for discussions in this arena; however, the inclusion of other digital formats will need to be addressed if departments have students

who would need these other formats. The Libraries would not archive CD-based formats.

- **Metadata**

- The Libraries require certain descriptive, administrative, and technical data about the electronic theses and dissertations in order to support access to the archive and preservation of its contents. Individual colleges and/or the Graduate Studies Program may wish to capture additional data not used by the Libraries. Optimally, these metadata would be integral to the submission form and developed cooperatively by all interested parties.

- **Release**

- The submission procedures must include a way for theses and dissertations to be released to the Libraries following approval at the college level. With the aim of moving the electronic files and metadata as little as possible, it would be ideal to have a submission and release process integral to the archive. Hypothetically, the student would fill out a web form with the necessary metadata and attach the thesis or dissertation, which would then be deposited into a restricted area of the repository not available to the public. Individuals with certifying authority in their colleges could log in and release theses and dissertations that are fully in order using a check box or other method; these would then become available to the public. If the student has requested a delayed release due to publications or patents pending, it would remain the responsibility of the college to release the thesis when appropriate; until released by the college, the copy of record will remain in the “dark archive” inaccessible to the public.
- Delaying or restricting release of a thesis or dissertation has some significant technical and procedural implications, so it is important for the Graduate and Professional Studies Council to address this issue as early as possible. The array of options for delaying release or restricting access to a thesis or dissertation varies widely among institutions that have already adopted ETDs. This paper (<http://txspace.tamu.edu/bitstream/1969.1/2483/1/FinalPaper.DOC>) has a good overview of this issue as it is currently handled at a variety of major research universities.

- **Rights**

- As the copyright holder, the student must grant the university the perpetual, non-exclusive, royalty-free right to permanently archive the thesis or dissertation and make it available to the public. This agreement can be part of a paper form (see <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/gradschool/Images/Thesis-Dissertation/ETDSigForm.pdf>) filed with the department, college, or graduate studies office, or integral to a web form (see <http://thesis.tamu.edu/e-submittal/copyright.php>). It is important that this agreement includes the ability to archive and provide access to the document “in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known” – this gives the university the flexibility to preserve the document however it sees fit. It would also be

desirable to have the student grant the same rights to the Texas Digital Library (TDL – see <http://www.tdl.org/>) in the event that the TDL harvests full-text theses and dissertations from the University of Houston.

- Online publication of theses and dissertations also creates university-as-publisher liability issues. Traditional publisher boilerplate includes the following language: “the Author warrants that the material contained in the Work is not subject to any other copyright, unless consents, as required, are obtained and provided to the University; that publication of the Work will not infringe on any third parties' rights; and that the Work does not contain any libelous or unlawful matter.”
- It would be desirable for each thesis or dissertation to include an explicit copyright statement. Students could also be made aware of Creative Commons licenses (see <http://creativecommons.org/about/licenses/meet-the-licenses>) for consideration.
- **Submission Guidelines**
 - The pilot ETD archive will use the DSpace platform. DSpace is digital repository software widely used at libraries and universities around the world, including several of our partner institutions in the Texas Digital Libraryⁱ and the Texas Digital Library itself. These draft procedures assume that the student will submit the completed thesis or dissertation directly into DSpace, where it will be inaccessible to the public until released by the college or department.ⁱⁱ
- 1. Student prepares the final document, equivalent to what would be submitted to UMI or sent for binding. This document should also include:
 - a. An explicit copyright statement
 - b. To ensure that the University will have the flexibility to adapt its preservation and access strategy to the changing digital environment, it is desirable for the University to retain the right to archive, preserve, and distribute ETDs through its locally-hosted repository as well as any cooperative repositories it participates in now or in the future. These rights could be specified in the University's publication agreement with the student (see item 2b) or granted by appending a Creative Commons licenseⁱⁱⁱ to the thesis or dissertation.
 - c. An unsigned copy of the signature page
- 2. Student submits the following in hard copy to the college or department^{iv}:
 - a. A signed copy of the signature page
 - b. A signed publication agreement^v
 - c. This agreement protects the University from liability as a publisher also grants to the University the right to archive, preserve, and provide access to the thesis or dissertation as it sees fit (see item 1a).
 - d. Information about release status
 - e. There are a variety of reasons why electronic publication of a thesis or dissertation would be delayed (national security, patent application, pending publication in a journal) or restricted (third-party copyright

- restrictions). We strongly encourage students to make their thesis or dissertation freely available through the ETD archive unless specific restrictions apply.
- f. Information about special access requirements will remain on file with the college or department. It will be the responsibility of the college or department to release the electronic document when appropriate and ensure that the appropriate access level has been applied (see item 4k).
 3. Student saves the document as a PDF file.
 4. Student logs into the archive and fills out an electronic submission form with the following:
 - a. Full title of the work
 - b. First name, last name, and year of birth
 - c. First and last name of thesis advisor
 - d. First and last names of other committee members
 - e. Degree name, level, and discipline
 - f. College or department
 - g. Month and year of graduation
 - h. Language(s) of the work
 - i. Abstract
 - j. Author-assigned keywords
 - k. Restrictions (UH users or freely available)
 5. Student attaches the PDF document to the completed submission form and submits to DSpace.
 6. The college or department is notified that a newly-deposited thesis or dissertation is awaiting approval.
 7. A designee of the college or department logs into the archive. If the student's paper forms (see item 2) are in order and the electronic submission form has been filled out correctly with the final version of the thesis or dissertation attached, the designee checks a box indicating that the document is ready for release.

ⁱ Texas Digital Library: <http://www.tdl.org>.

ⁱⁱ If we encounter problems in this workflow at the pilot stage, it may be necessary to introduce an extra layer of software to manage the submission process. The steps that the student and the college or department would follow remain much the same in either case.

ⁱⁱⁱ Creative Commons licenses: <http://creativecommons.org/about/licenses/meet-the-licenses>. This suite of licenses preserves authors' standard copyright protections while articulating specific terms of use that do not require explicit permission from the author. The rights afforded by the Creative Commons licenses range from lenient to highly restrictive; the minimally-restrictive "Attribution (By:)" license might be a good option for ETDs. A Creative Commons license cannot be revoked once applied.

^{iv} The process at Texas A&M is more fully web-based (<http://thesis.tamu.edu/e-submittal/help/help.php>) but still requires the student to deposit a hard-copy approval form with the thesis office.

^v Sample agreement based on Texas A&M and others: *"I hereby certify that, if appropriate, I have obtained and attached hereto a written permission statement from the owner(s) of each third party copyrighted matter to be included in my thesis, dissertation, or record of study, allowing distribution as specified [see item 2c]. I certify that the version I submitted is the same as that approved by [my advisory committee and the Dean of my college]. I hereby grant to the [University of Houston] or its agents the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible, under the conditions specified [see item 2c], my thesis or dissertation, in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. To the extent this thesis or dissertation is an educational record as defined in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 USC 1232g), I consent to disclosure of it to anyone who requests a copy. I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis or dissertation. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis or dissertation."*