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EMORY JOINS BOURGEONING TREND: GRADUATE SCHOOL AND LIBRARIES LAUNCH ELECTRONIC THESES, DISSERTATIONS PROGRAM

Beginning in fall 2008, all Emory University graduate students will submit their doctoral dissertations and masters theses in electronic form for the university’s Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETD, https://etd.library.emory.edu/) database. ETD is an online, searchable repository of Emory University graduates’ research. Undergraduates completing honors theses will contribute to the online repository beginning in 2009.

The Graduate School and the Libraries teamed up two years ago to begin developing ETD. Creating such university-wide repositories of student research is a national trend that has been gaining momentum among top research universities for the last decade, says Lisa A. Tedesco, dean of the Graduate School.

“Theses and dissertations are among the most important intellectual works of the university. Sharing them can raise the profile of the university in the United States and abroad,” Tedesco said. “Putting our scholarship online is a strategic way to maximize and extend Emory’s reputation for producing leading-edge research.”

The Emory campus benefits from ETD in numerous other ways, as well. In the past, students and their advisers often waited months after graduation for theses and dissertations to reach library shelves and the Proquest repository. With ETD, many students will find their work online just a few weeks after they leave the Emory campus as graduates. Through ETD, they will find it much easier to include audio, video, computer animation, data sets and other materials with their submissions.

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From the Graduate School’s perspective, processing theses and dissertations will become more efficient since the new submission system provides automated management tools for academic tracking. And in the libraries, ETD will free shelf space for storing other materials that are not available digitally, says Rick Luce, vice provost and director of libraries.
“The ETD will be the University’s copy of record of student research, and will be carefully preserved by the libraries,” Luce said. “This will make theses and dissertations more easily accessible, allowing researchers broader and more timely access to Emory scholarship.”

Submitting research for inclusion in ETD is easy, said Paul O’Grady, project manager for the ETD program.

“Students will simply submit their work as a PDF file, along with some basic information about their research,” he said. “This information will be displayed in the ETD repository, and also transmitted to Proquest/UMI for their database.”

O’Grady and other colleagues from the libraries will be holding information and training sessions throughout spring semester and again during fall to prepare students to submit their work, and to introduce staff to the new procedures. Sessions for students will include training from Lisa Macklin, the head of the libraries’ office of Intellectual Property Rights, on copyright, trademark and publishing issues in the digital age. Refer to the ETD website, https://etd.library.emory.edu/, for a list of training classes for students and staff.

The Graduate School offers students choices on access restriction for those who may not want their work available online immediately upon graduation. Basic information on all theses and dissertations will be listed in the ETD index. However, access to full text can be set for immediate release or withheld for one, two or six years following graduation. Research on which patents are pending will be kept out of the repository until the necessary filings are completed.

The ETD program and related software were developed during 2006 with input from faculty members, librarians, university administrators and graduate students. A pilot program began in March 2007 among doctoral students from anthropology, art history, chemistry and epidemiology, with favorable results. The ETD repository is currently home to 30 theses and dissertations, 14 of which are available in full-text form.

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The Graduate School at Emory University (http://www.emory.edu/GSOAS/) offers degrees in 41 programs across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Roughly 1,500 students are enrolled in our 41 degree programs, and graduate faculty number more than 650. Students benefit from a low student-teacher ratio and enjoy the collegiality naturally fostered in such a personal setting. They also benefit from the intellectual stimulation, research opportunities, and exposure to scholarly resources that come from being part of a large research university located in a thriving metropolitan area.

The Emory University Libraries (http://web.library.emory.edu/) in Atlanta and Oxford, Ga., are dedicated to fostering courageous inquiry among students and scholars at Emory University and around the world. The nine libraries' holdings include more than 3.1 million print and electronic volumes, 40,000-plus electronic journals, and internationally renowned special collections.

Emory University (http://www.emory.edu/) is one of the nation’s leading private research universities and a member of the Association of American Universities. Emory is known for its demanding academics, outstanding undergraduate college of arts and sciences, highly ranked professional schools and state-of-the-art research facilities. Emory is ranked as one of the country's top 20 national universities by U.S. News & World Report. In addition to its nine schools, the university encompasses The Carter Center, Yerkes National Primate Research Center and Emory Healthcare, the state's largest and most comprehensive health care system.