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Managing and improving electronic thesis and dissertation programs (book review)

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Managing and Improving Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Programs: A Practical Guide for Librarians by Matthew C. Mariner. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018, 117 pp., ISBN: 978-1-5381-0100-1, $65.00.

As universities increasingly transition from print to electronic submissions of theses and dissertations, more librarians will find themselves tasked with managing programs to collect and preserve these unique works. Matthew C. Mariner's new title, **Managing and Improving Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Programs: A Practical Guide for Librarians**, fills a real need for resources in this area. While the content seems to be based on Mariner's own experience rather than an objective assessment of the field, there is valuable information here for both beginner and advanced electronic thesis and dissertation (ETD) professionals.

The book fulfills the promise of a "practical guide," as it progresses from the basics of why and how to establish an ETD collecting program, to more advanced considerations such as retrospective digitization and unusual formats. Each chapter contains a concise "key points" summary section and sometimes a case study to illustrate real-world scenarios. The book's length is manageable for reading cover-to-cover, although readers can easily consult various sections as needed. Mariner's engaging style and enthusiasm make for a pleasant and informative read.

Some of the stronger points of the guide include Mariner's discussion of laying the foundations for an ETD program (Chapters 1 and 2). He makes a convincing case that ETDs represent, perhaps better than anything else, the unique research output of an institution. Mariner also has a firm grasp of the copyright issues of ETD programs. In Chapter 3, Author Rights in ETDs, his explanation of rights issues will be accessible even to those with no prior copyright expertise. In Chapter 4, Retrospective Thesis and Dissertation Digitization, Mariner successfully lays out the factors to consider when gaining permissions to digitize print theses and dissertations

collections. He also provides clear explanations of technical equipment and systems such as IR

platforms (Chapter 2) and scanners for digitization (Chapter 4). Seasoned ETD professionals will

especially benefit from reading Chapters 5 and 6, which examine non-traditional ETD formats,

ideas for adding value to ETDs, and innovative uses for ETD collections. For example, ETD

bibliographies could fuel a cost analysis of how library resources are being used in theses and

dissertations.

Although coverage of the topic is fairly comprehensive, the book suffers from occasional

omissions and biases. For example, Mariner discussions ProQuest and various IR platforms, but

neglects to mention that ProQuest already has an established workflow for sending ETD

information from ProQuest to IRs. In the discussion of establishing an ETD program (Chapters 1

and 2), he does not mention developing an embargo policy, which in my own experience is one

of the most time-consuming and difficult tasks. In the later chapters on the future of ETDs, it

would have been helpful to include more discussion of new features such as DOIs, ORCID IDs,

and research data deposit (to name a few that have come up at my institution). Curiously, the

book contains virtually no references for its claims and arguments. To give just one example,

Mariner states: "In most cases, institutions have found that using both ProQuest and their own

internal digital repositories to disseminate and preserve ETDs is ideal." (p. 9) What is the source

of this information? Has there been a survey of institutional use of ProQuest vs. institutional

repositories? If so, that would be an excellent resource for ETD librarians to consult.

Overall, despite some gaps, I would recommend this guide for library and information

science collections. As the art of managing ETD programs matures within academic libraries,

this book successfully covers some established best practices. After about five years of managing

ETDs myself, I came away with new ideas about moving past some of the stumbling blocks in

our program. With very few existing monographs on the topic, Mariner has made an important contribution to the literature.