Unlocking Past & Present Research: Open Access ETDs at the University of Rhode Island

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Unlocking Past & Present Research: 

*Open Access* ETDs at the University of Rhode Island

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USETDA 2016 Conference
Overview

- Transitioning to Open Access for both Current & Retrospectively Digitized ETDs

- Will discuss successes, challenges, and lessons learned from the implementation, highlighting:
  - Rights
  - Collaboration and communication
  - Workflow
First, some URI statistics

- Rhode Island’s public research university, founded in 1888; known especially for Graduate School of Oceanography
- 13,641 undergraduates and 2,972 graduate students
- About 100 PhD dissertations and 120 Masters theses per year

University of Rhode Island in the Winter by Flickr user cjthibeault is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0
The low hanging fruit of ETDs

- I joined the URI Libraries in March 2012 – tasked with building IR collections

- Graduate School had recently begun electronic ETD submissions using ProQuest (in addition to print)

- Archivist had set plans in motion for a server to receive ETDs from ProQuest

- Libraries already had a Digital Commons repository

- Some older theses had been digitized and uploaded in a one-time project; could we expand?
Why Open Access?

- Circulation of printed theses/dissertations = negligible, and ProQuest downloads low (~800/year)

- Open Access scholarship is much more highly read, and most studies have found a citation advantage (see SPARC Europe OpCit Project)

- Gratis vs. Libre OA

- Theses & dissertations:
  - Have value to authors
  - Have value for scholarship
  - Bring visibility to the University

_They’re meant to be read – set them free!_
“2-pronged” Implementation

- **Current ETDs:**
  Begin to archive and share ETDs openly through our repository, DigitalCommons@URI

- **Retrospective ETDs:**
  Digitize and make available printed theses & dissertations from the library collection
Open ETD implementation
Key issues/questions

- **Rights**
  - Can we legally provide open access? Who owns the copyright?
  - How to accommodate embargoes for current ETDs?

- **Collaboration & Communication**
  - How to communicate changes to students and advisors?
  - How to coordinate a strategy among departments?

- **Workflow**
  - Can we move forward with sparse staffing and IT support?
  - How to incorporate new procedures with existing theses/dissertations processes (submission, library cataloging…)?
Current ETDs: Rights

- University Manual contains a Policy!

“10.42.15 Thesis and Dissertation Copyright Ownership. The rights in copyright for theses and dissertations produced as part of a University degree requirement shall belong to the student preparing the material. A student must, as a condition of the award of any degree, grant a royalty-free license or permission to the University . . . to reproduce, publicly distribute on a non-commercial basis, copies of student project reports, theses, or dissertations which would include any software developed as a part of the student project.”

- And, students sign a Library Rights Statement
Current ETDs: Rights

- **Not so fast!** In an overhaul of the University’s IP Policy, the aforementioned policy was *accidentally removed*.

- The Policy in the University Manual was designed for print copies.

- Library Rights Statement was also designed for print and needs updating.
Current ETDs: Rights

- Need to update policies & procedures for Open ETDs

1. Get Policy reinstated in the University Manual
   - Re-submitted to Faculty Senate
   - Also went through some committee hoops: Graduate Council, Council for Research
   - Approved with no problems
2. Update Library Rights Statement

- New & improved Library Rights Statement serves two purposes:
  - Make students aware of online access and embargo options
  - Make advisors aware of online access and embargo options
- Require both student and advisor signature on this form

http://web.uri.edu/graduate-school/files/library_rights_statement.pdf
Current ETDs: Rights

3. Create embargo policy
   - Researched other institutions’ approach to embargoes
   - Decided on 6 months, 1 year, and 2 years options
   - Students must choose when they submit to ProQuest
   - At the end of 2 years, author can request an extension if needed
   - This was approved in the Graduate Council
Retrospective ETDs: Rights

- Who holds the rights to older theses and dissertations (only in print)?

- Determined the University Manual policy and Library Rights Statement applied to the majority of them

- We could provide digital open access, with takedowns if needed

- Some risk, but it’s very low
Current ETDs: Collaboration & Communication

- URI stakeholders
  - Libraries: Digital Initiatives unit; University Archives; Cataloging
  - Graduate School: Graduate Council (governing body); Thesis and Dissertation Coordinator
  - Graduate students
  - Faculty advisors

- Vendors
  - ProQuest
  - Bepress (Digital Commons)
Current ETDs: Collaboration & Communication

- Let graduate students know about online access
  - Integrate into ETD Orientation (2x each semester)
  - Graduate School website and Digital Commons
  - Library Rights Statement
  - ProQuest submission click-through

- Make sure advisors are aware of online access and embargo options
  - This was a surprise – Advisors began contacting us concerned about their students’ work being online
  - The new Library Rights Statement needs to be signed by advisors to ensure they have been informed
Retrospective ETDs: Collaboration & Communication

- Collaboration within Libraries
  - Digital Initiatives responsible for digitization, upload to DigitalCommons@URI, and overall coordination of project
  - Archives holds the print and selects likely candidates for digitization (determined partly by format)
  - Catalogers add new links to existing records
  - On Demand has its own workflow
Current ETDs: Workflow

- New workflow for receiving ETDs and uploading to DigitalCommons@URI
  - Only semi-automated; low tech
  - Relied on student workers at first; now one staff member
  - “Iterative” approach = Start with what we have and adjust/improve as we go
Retrospective ETDs: Workflow

- Again, low tech and iterative
  - Digitize on flatbed Epson scanner
  - Batch-upload to IR, but still mostly manual process
  - Primarily student workers (undergraduates)

- Ongoing and On-Demand

- So far, have digitized ~450 theses and ~120 dissertations
Successes, Challenges & Next Steps
Readership of URI dissertations in DigitalCommons@URI during July 2016
Massive increase in usage

- ProQuest average: ~825 downloads per year for all ETDs

- IR average:
  - Dissertations: ~40,000 downloads per year
  - Theses: ~42,000 downloads per year

- IR downloads increase exponentially every year (since 2013)
Challenges & Next steps . . .

- Some abstracts on embargoed ETDs are very detailed and may reveal too much information; how to address?
- Move towards full Open Access by incorporating Creative Commons licenses
- Improve how we communicate options to students and advisors
- Deal with Data!
- Fully automate upload
Questions?

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