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2019 Symposium on Electronic Theses and  
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5-23-2019

# Collaborative Participant Notes from the 2019 ETD Symposium at Purdue University on May 23, 2019

2019 Purdue ETD Symposium Participants

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# Giant Leaps: Symposium on Electronic Theses and Dissertations

## Collaborative Notes

May 23, 2019

Purdue University - West Lafayette, Indiana

Symposium website: <http://www.lib.purdue.edu/etdgiantleaps/index.html>

Link to slides: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/etdgiantleaps>

Link to the working version of these notes: <https://tinyurl.com/etdpurdue>

Twitter hashtag: [#etdpurdue](#)

## Program

### 1. Introduction and Welcome

Purdue University Graduate School & Libraries and School of Information Studies

- Shift from print to digital
- Shift from documents to other forms of expressing student scholarship
- Disruptions for technology, roles, policies, culture - and the definition of what a 'thesis' is
- Affects all levels: individual students and their aspirations, the primary professor, committee, department, college, school, thesis office and graduate college, university, discipline, and scholarly norms
- We have gathered faculty, staff, and students including grad colleges, heads of graduate programs, thesis offices, and libraries to share practices and think creatively about challenges and opportunities presented by electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs), especially those that are not awarded based on a document ("non-traditional", non-monographic works)

### 2. ETD Plus: When Non-traditional is the New Normal, What's the Norm for ETD Programs?

[Martin Halbert](#), Dean of University Libraries, U of North Carolina at Greensboro - opening keynote address

1. Core problems - were always issues but electronic formats now give us the opportunity to deal with them
  - a. Print runs are in many places yet the standard outside of US
  - b. Not all are print formats, i.e., the problematic of performance accompaniments and IP (rights and limited access)
    - i. Example: Antonin Dvorak's Piano in G Minor, Opus 33: A Discussion of Musical Intent and Pianistic Effectiveness
    - ii. Example: 3D or physical items like tapestries cannot be captured and presented. Photos in a PDF do not do justice. In Computer Science, for example, Code files not archived just disappear without a plan for capture and preservation. Maybe documentation for code should be manifest as comments made in the code to be read instead of the traditional thesis?

- iii. Example: “Critical Discussion of Pleroma: A Digital Drama and Its Relevance to Tragic Form in Music”
      - 1. <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc33228>
  - c. Opportunities do present themselves with varying or dynamic formats for finding ways to share and present the works.
  - d. How do we capture the output of scholarship?
    - i. Ingestion processes often cannot capture complex digital objects
  - e. ND LTD Global ETD search: <http://search.ndltd.org/>
  - f. ETD Lifecycle Management project, <https://www.usetda.org/resources/etd-lifecycle-management/>
  - g. ETD Lifecycle Model, <https://educopia.org/electronic-theses-and-dissertations/etd/>
  - h. ETD lifecycle management workshop, <https://educopia.org/etd-lifecycle-management-workshop/>
  - i. International Survey 2013 <http://hdl.handle.net/10919/50978>
    - i. Ingest process is moving from an assembly-line model to a more varied process similar to research data management
  - j. Policy Scan of 230 universities 2013
    - i. Only 18% had institutional-level policy, most were weak and many people were not aware of them
  - k. Their research data management report: <https://clir.org/pubs/reports/pub160>
  - l. ETDplus project 2015 surveyed ETD program staff and grad students
    - i. Only 20% of ETDs were simply text
    - ii. 38% of students said non-text content was the most important piece of their scholarship, but only 13% of them had plans to submit those materials
    - iii. 25 of 65 ETD staff didn't know they would take non-PDFs or not
  - m. ETDPlus Toolkit: <https://educopia.org/etd-toolkit/>
  - n. ETDPlus Workbench reference implementation, <https://educopia.org/curation-workbench/>
- 2. Broader issues
  - a. We have to accept that we can't force scholars to implement our best practices for data management and preservation.
  - b. Stop trying to herd cats and motivate them instead. Cats are motivated by food -- graduate students are motivated by graduation (although one might argue grad students are similarly motivated by food). --- Who at your institution can champion this topic?
- 3. Where do we go from here?
  - a. Alignment across departments
  - b. Motivation
    - i. Collaborations
    - ii. Grant funding

- iii. Community partnerships
- iv. Increased visibility
- v. Societal benefits

### 3. The Landscape of Modern Theses

Matt Hannah - Assistant Professor of Library Science and Digital Humanities, Purdue University

1. The Neoliberal University - political and economic theory
2. ETDs as response? Or a signpost of the times in higher ed
3. Economic decline in Humanities? Fewer students, fewer faculty, fewer grads, more debt - jobs?
4. Ethical option 1 : reform higher ed and decrease non-marketable degrees (less “scholarship for the sake of scholarship”)
5. Ethical option 2 : diversify higher education to strengthen chances to get jobs
6. If grad students absolutely set on tenure track job, perhaps they do want to double-down on traditional path with dissertation, etc., until the academy is reformed.
  - a. Students do need diversity in their portfolios, a web presence, etc., for shape of your dissertation
7. Expect students to come out of university with both a CV and a resume
8. Four alternative model examples:
  - a. Infinite Ulysses by Amanda Visconti, <http://infiniteulysses.com/>
  - b. Unflattening by Nick Sousanis, <http://spinweaveandcut.com/unflattening/>
  - c. My Gothic Dissertation by Anna Williams, <https://www.annawilliamsweb.com/my-gothic-dissertation.html>
  - d. Vanishing Leaves by Jesse Merandy, <http://jessemerandy.com/>
9. Challenges of Implementing Alternative Theses
  - a. Academic jobs still privilege the book
  - b. Projects require different skills than dissertations
  - c. Difficult for dissertation committees to advise and evaluate
    - DH librarians can help here
  - D. Storage and maintenance of projects

### 4. Beyond the PDF

Heidi Arbisi-Kelm

1. Background
  - a. Writer’s Workshop and MFAs
  - b. MFA theses still forced into document format for collection, even if it’s only a few pages of artist’s statement
    - i. [Example here](#): notice “2 leaves” of text only; no images.
  - c. Missing opportunities to capture other formats
2. Goal - capture the most representative forms or examples of student work

3. What set us in motion?
  - a. NextGen PhD grant
  - b. Beyond the pdf conference
4. Help students recognize when their work is data. Example: Humanities students creating podcasts or hosting interviews and transcripts.
5. Pilots in theater, music and dance (see webinar link in slides)
6. Lessons learned
  - a. Gap between student work and what we collect
  - b. Shifting from compliance approach to preservation approach (collection and preservation to serve the “greater good”)
  - c. Partnership with libraries is essential (ETDs are a “team sport”)
  - d. Expect pdf will persist as a component of most alternative ETDs
  - e. Record list of related digital objects in new table of contents in ETD document
7. Questions - what is the purpose of the thesis? How do you capture intellectual gains?

## 5. Purdue Graduate School Thesis and Dissertation Policy Changes

James Mohler & Ashlee Messersmith

- New leadership at Grad School and change in dialog from faculty / staff / students who may have been used to hearing “No, our policy doesn’t allow that” and changing the response to “Yes” or “No, but we can do X or Y or Z”
- Documentation and preservation is important for non-dissertation project-based degrees; same can be applied to ETDs or ATDs
- Survey of departments showed that many are already considering alternative thesis formats like articles or born-digital projects
  - Can run into hurdles related to copyright, accusations of self-plagiarism
- New requirements
  - Open access (with some exceptions)
  - ADA compliant
- Impact
  - Now about 30% of submissions are article-based
  - Portfolio submissions of three published articles
  - First website thesis will be accepted summer 2019
  - New open access repository has 10,500 views and 1,900 downloads so far
  - Need to defeat the kind of self-propagation that universities are so good at

## 6. Guiding Graduate Students in Data Management in Practice

Michael Witt

- PURR (Purdue University Research Repository), <https://purr.purdue.edu/>
  - Collaboration between
    - Libraries
      - Preservation and stewardship
    - research office
      - competitive grant applications

- Meeting funder requirements
  - IT
    - Infrastructure
  - Built on HUBzero
- PURR/research data management value proposition to a faculty researcher
  - Help writing a DMP
    - Boilerplate text, sample plans, self assessment, DMPTool, tutorials, workshops, consultation
    - Grants office asks applicants if they intend to use PURR, and alerts the PURR team about those that do
  - Private collaborative online space to share work in progress
    - Up to 1 TB of space at no cost
    - Similar to dropbox
  - Option to publish data with a DOI
    - Up to 10 GB at no cost
    - Mediated deposit process that involves a review by the PURR team
  - Libraries will archive published data for at least 10 years
    - Wait 30 days after publication to archive to allow for any necessary edits or changes
    - Files serialized by BagIt and archived in MetaArchive
  - Measure the impact of data sharing
    - DOIs, Scholix
    - Scholars should cite their own data
- PURR staffing
  - Executive committee, steering committee, PURR staff, and collaboration with subject specialist librarians
- Value proposition for a grad student
  - Workflow with thesis office so students receive an email about PURR when they pass their prelims
  - Email contains a customized link to their storage space in PURR, which they can share with their committees
  - Publish data with DOI and optional embargo
  - Student cites their data in dissertation

## 7. [Preserving Complex Digital Objects](#)

Carly Dearborn

- Digital preservation requires technology, resources, organization (people, policies)
- Be wary of easy answers because digital preservation is hard. Access is harder.
  - If we can't preserve access to a thing, why are we keeping the thing?
- Deposit policies should be informed by long-term preservation capabilities.
- Preservation should be embedded in existing tools and functions, and codified in policy.
- Deposit is not the end of the life cycle. Preservation is an iterative process.

- (Student and faculty) What are the most important factors of the research - what can be preserved long-term? Educating students on levels of preservation.

## 8. Panel: Challenges and Culture

- Anthony Bushner, PhD Candidate, Rhetoric and Composition
  - Kathryn Henke Evans, Visual Resources Librarian
  - Justin Race, Director, Purdue University Press
  - Lydia Utley, Research Analyst, Department of Forestry
  - Laura Zanotti, Associate Professor of Anthropology
1. What do you see as the preeminent challenge in changing dissertation/thesis standards?
    - a. With the U Press:
      - i. Front end - credentialing a professor (tenure achievement)
      - ii. Back end - find content, make the content, sell the content
    - b. Anthro (advisors)
      - i. Fairness and equity - building similarities in the criteria that graduate students are evaluated
      - ii. Transferability
      - iii. Legibility
      - iv. Success - Growing competitiveness of the job market in academia and elsewhere; how does an alternative dissertation fit in that market and remain effective
    - c. Current graduate student
      - i. Challenges are needed in the idea of what is rigorous in emerging scholarship types
      - ii. How do you quantify the variable amounts of work from projects, to dissertation, to a hybrid
    - d. Research analyst
      - i. Fairness in norms and change on the norms - i.e., time involved ten years ago using a fledgling technology versus one that is now fully developed
      - ii. Needs for reproducibility
    - e. Visual resources librarian
      - i. Exhibition is the thesis
      - ii. Documentation is the dissemination of knowledge
      - iii. Documenting thesis talks or performances (capture, not edited)
  2. Related question from Twitter user @ProfPowell: I'd like to hear about how they got faculty and admin on board for alternative formats, esp. vis-a-vis defense and deposit.
    - i. Programs are interested in more public-facing content as dissertation outputs, so the gaming dissertation is one that definitely meets that and its alternate form gets approval
    - ii. Interested student inspire changes to departmental policies
      - Customary, multi-modal, article-based dissertation formats

- Having different dissertation models could be used as a recruitment tool
- 3. Question from Twitter user @smdadamo: How can we make collaborative writing and research production more acceptable to disciplinary logics of merit, credentialing, and publishing and what forms can this take?
  - i. Allowing students to submit multi-authored dissertations
  - ii. Tell the students the goal they need to achieve, not how they get there.
- 4. Why would we want to transform a credentialing system that has been around for hundreds of years?
  - a. Job market
  - b. Departmental Survivability
  - c. Advancement in technologies
  - d. Expansion - books and journals will still exist
  - e. Afraid to let go of the past - it doesn't serve its purpose any longer

## 9. Lightning talks: Examples of Non-traditional Theses and Dissertations from a Variety of Disciplines

- [English - Erika Findley & Kim Fleshman](#), Bowling Green State University
  - Transgenre dissertation - combined art and text
  - Does this become figures in the description and comparison to format requirements? In the shared case, no.
- [Chemistry - David Zwicky](#), Purdue University
  - Built 3D models of protein folding of polypeptides that was able to be printed
  - [makezine.com/peppyptides](http://makezine.com/peppyptides) or [peppyptides.org](http://peppyptides.org)
- English - Daniel Johnson, University of Notre Dame
  - <https://earlybookmarket.com/introduction.html>
  - Hosted on the author's personal website; do we use Docker, which we heard about today?
  - How do we 'publish' and fix the document?
- [Geographic Information Systems - Nicole Kong](#), Purdue University
  - GIS in research - generated content
  - Campus location data from archival resources
  - Data sharing at [datacommons.psu.edu](http://datacommons.psu.edu)
- [Engineering - Austin McLean](#), ProQuest
  - Proquest can accept any file format - it is placed on the platform to be delivered back as supplemental files.
  - Land, Emory Scott. The University of Wyoming, Thesis on Motor Control (1907)
    - Table oriented content
    - Photo heavy content
    - Blueprints
- [Visual Arts - Jere Odell](#), IUPUI



- Why we should not place and don't place restrictions on content submissions

## **10. The Doctoral Dissertation: Observations, Perspectives, Protean Nature?**

Jean-Pierre Hérubel, closing keynote address

- Globally doctorates are a function of an information economy
- “For bricklaying does not produce architects” - Gilbert Highet
- Very few humans can be truly interdisciplinary - to know and master and function in more than one discipline (and withstand the criticism from all camps!)
- Dissertations are steeped in the discipline
- Different traditions, different protocols, different vetting
- Dissertations are protean (changing)
- In some cases, pro forma, in other cases not at all (you can fail, and some do)
- What constitutes knowledge, and what constitutes the creation of new knowledge? How do you measure it?
- In some countries, the thesis is the *magnus opus* - not a training exercise
- Credentials vary widely in different countries and cultures
- Individual or team generated? Credit?
- England didn't have PhD until after WWI and it became marketable
- Doctoral degrees (Ed, PharmD, DBA, DA, D.Eng, etc) themselves are very different in nature and purpose; some are completely research-oriented, others focussed on practice
- Moved towards research and PhD
- Psychological and sociological influences on dissertation writing - impact on the individual (liminal journey)
- Identification with high degree of specialization for doctorates
- Internal forces: time-to-degree, high debt, declining opportunities to publish dissertation as book, work-force and life demands, powerful vocational interest within academic institutional frameworks
- External forces: decline in faculty positions, doctorates are more common, diminishing resources to support PhD students, especially in humanities and arts
- Articles in/as dissertation is common in the U.K.
- Small percentage of humanities dissertations are published afterwards as monographs
- Don't be too quick to say, I've got the answer (for ETDs, etc.) - invest time to refine and articulate the questions
- What do non-traditional theses add to the imprimatur?
- Are these an attempt to re-legitimize humanities & other pure academic disciplines facing an onslaught from the commoditized approach to learning and knowledge?

## Small Group Discussion Notes

Get lunch and convene with others in your group number (on back of nametag). Nominate a reporter to take notes and report out in plenary discussion after lunch. Questions suggested by Michael Witt:

1. What kinds of theses are you seeing now or do you expect to see that are not traditional monographs? How are you (or will you be) handling them?
2. What new policies may need to be created or what existing policies may need to change to adapt to them?
3. How are you interacting with faculty and observing the culture of credentialing within the departments as it relates to non-traditional theses?
4. What are the concerns and opportunities for your graduate college and thesis office and their role with ETDs?
5. What are the concerns and opportunities for your libraries and their role with ETDs?
6. What are the concerns and opportunities for your technology provider/s and their role with ETDs?
7. How are you currently organized and collaborate within your institution to process theses? In what ways might this need to change (or not)?
8. Are there ways we can collaborate across institutions to address these challenges and opportunities?
9. Will it ever stop raining?

### **Some notes from small group discussions:**

Non-traditional Theses & Dissertations received by our institutions-

- Dynamic networks
- ARticle based portfolios
- Textiles
- Anticipate receiving virtual reality environments produced by 3D imaging of buildings in the future
  - Challenges
    - *At what point do institutions with limited funds invest in the technology necessary to host alternative ETDs given that currently these are still outliers*
    - *If institutions seek consortial approaches how do we manage different institutional policies, and different departmental policies within institutions.*
      - *Such policies include who can access the platform, file format requirements, requirements for comprehensiveness of submissions (e.g. if a computer program is submitted as an ETD will the researcher be required to submit the code, or only the exe file?), preservation policies etc..*
      - *Who takes responsibility for preserving what in such a model?*
      - *How will we design workflows that can be implemented across differently staffed institutions?*

Policy changes that may be required-

- Do we specify a list of acceptable file formats or allow researchers to use whatever file format or program they choose?
  - Note: Proquest will accept any format but commits to preserving a specific list of formats
- Advantages and challenges of IR-first / ProQuest-first submissions and how they interface to other systems (process workflows, Banner data, IR repository metadata, digital student records, etc). Challenges can refer to how submission content is tagged as primary dissertation, supplemental content, and various access rights on the record and content. Related article: [Whose Dissertation Is It, Anyway? Balking at a requirement to upload a copy of his doctoral thesis to an online database run by library services company ProQuest, one student pushes back.](#) [By [Lindsay McKenzie](#)]
- Digital scholarship can signal boost diverse voices that have not been historically privileged to form the basis of textbooks.
- Incorporating alternative dissertation options can be translated into a way of recruiting a more diverse student body by creating a support structure for celebrating varying cultural competencies, for example indigenous & underrepresented populations.

Embargoing a thesis - If a student retains the copyright to the thesis, why are we restricting how long of a time they can “embargo”. At Purdue, we will allow a thesis to be “Confidential” for up to 2 years, then a student can embargo the thesis for as long as they wish. The embargo will allow the metadata to be published, but the file will be publicly restricted for an indefinite period of time.

## Symposium Participants

1. Amy Kuether, University of Wisconsin
2. Annapurni Subramaniam, Purdue University
3. Ashlee Messersmith, Purdue University
4. Austin McLean, ProQuest
5. Ayla Stein Kenfield, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
6. Carly Dearborn, Purdue University
7. Christine Harper, Saint Louis University
8. Colleen Ann Mullarkey, University of Chicago
9. Dan Tracy, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
10. Daniel Johnson, University of Notre Dame
11. Dean Lingley, Purdue University
12. Devi Prasad V. Potluri, Chicago State University
13. Devin Higgins, Michigan State University
14. Donna Ferullo, Purdue University
15. Ericka Findley, Bowling Green State University
16. Erla Heyns, Purdue University
17. Gene Ann Fausett, Purdue University
18. Heidi Arbisi-Kelm, University of Iowa

19. Jacqueline Walker, Rush University
20. Jaime Goldman, Nova Southeastern University
21. Jamie Mohler, Purdue University
22. Janet Swatscheno, University of Illinois at Chicago
23. Jean-Pierre V. M. Hérubel, Purdue University
24. Jere Odell, IUPUI
25. Jessica Horowitz, ProQuest
26. Justin Race, Purdue University
27. Kathy Evans, Purdue University
28. Kim Fleshman, Bowling Green State University
29. Laura Zanotti, Purdue University
30. Lydia Utley, Purdue University
31. Mandy Havert, University of Notre Dame
32. Margaret Heller, Loyola University Chicago
33. Martin Halbert, University of North Carolina-Greensboro
34. Mary Johnson, Purdue University
35. Matthew N Hannah, Purdue University
36. Megan Sapp Nelson, Purdue University
37. Michael Witt, Purdue University
38. Gayle Porter, Chicago State University
39. Richard Darga, Chicago State University
40. Richard Grant, Purdue University
41. Sandi Caldrone, Purdue University
42. Sarah Frankel, University of Louisville
43. Sarah Hare, Indiana University Bloomington
44. Shari Hill Sweet, University of Notre Dame
45. Shawn Donkin, Purdue University
46. Stephen Finlay, Indiana University South Bend
47. Tim Watson, The Ohio State University
48. Tom Atkinson, Purdue University
49. Tony Bushner, Purdue University
50. Willa Camille Liburd Tavernier, Indiana University Bloomington