April 23, 2008

To: The University of Alabama Graduate Council

CC: David Francko, John Schmitt, Natalie Adams, John Chambers

From: Ad Hoc Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Steering Committee
Members: Vivian Wright (Co-chair), Janis O’Donnell (Co-chair), Catherine Davies, Kari Frederickson, Fran Conners, Gary Hoover, Jennings Bryant, Phil Bishop, Ramana Reddy, Steven Corhern, Mehmet Yaya, Mike Perko, Jordan Kosberg, Janet Lee-Smeltzer, and Roy Ann Sherrod

Subject: ETD REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Charge to the Committee:

1) To review ETD procedures at other universities and conduct research on advantages and disadvantages, implementation procedures, costs relative to traditional theses and dissertations, and how potential issues and concerns have been addressed at other institutions.

2) To determine whether ETD implementation should be recommended at this institution, and if so, to provide recommendations on preferred models, time tables, and organization.

Committee Activities:

In addition to email dialog, the ETD committee formally met on 3/12/08, 3/26/08, 4/1/08, and 4/9/08. The committee began by reviewing the ETD implementation plans from other universities and their ETD websites, including many SEC schools, UAB, and other schools considered to be leaders of ETD implementation (e.g. Virginia Tech). We learned that many universities have had functioning ETD programs in place for 10 years or more.

At the first meeting, multiple issues were discussed, including concerns regarding software compatibility, need for additional staff (or a realignment of duties), and handling of signature pages. The graduate school arranged for representatives from UAB to visit campus and present UAB’s method of implementation for the 4/1 meeting. At our 3/26 ETD meeting, committee members came with specific questions we wished for UAB to address. Questions were sent to UAB representatives, Dr. Jeff Engler, Associate Dean of the Graduate School and Jan Baird, Educational Services Coordinator at the UAB Graduate School. This list of 16 questions included the issues already mentioned and others regarding file sizes, conversion considerations, and archiving. This meeting was quite informative, answering most of the committee members’ questions and addressing most concerns. At the 4/9 meeting, attendees agreed that we were ready to bring forth this proposal, which outlines our committee’s recommendations, along with any remaining concerns.
Overview and Recommendations:

Implementation of ETD procedures has two advantages relative to paper copy submission and distribution.

- ETD submission is more efficient for the student, the Graduate School and the Libraries.
- The research and scholarly activities of the University can be more easily and broadly disseminated, which will raise our visibility.

The committee has concluded that the concerns and issues of importance raised over the course of its work can be adequately addressed, and therefore, recommends:

1) that the University of Alabama Graduate School adopt Electronic Thesis and Dissertation submission. This recommendation received unanimous support from all members of the ETD Committee and from the Student Government Association which passed a resolution in support of ETD on March 6, 2008.

2) that ETD be implemented with the following timeline:
   b. At the conclusion of the Fall 2008 semester, the committee recommends an evaluation for possible modifications of the process and adjustment of a timeline for transition to mandatory ETD submission.
   c. Possible move to mandatory ETD - Fall 2009. This time frame may need to be extended, if the first year evaluation indicates that more time is needed to address unforeseen issues.

3) that ETD submission be implemented via ProQuest.

4) that one person in the Graduate School be designated as the ETD submission contact and administrator.

5) that a technical help person be designated at least for the initial first year of ETD implementation.

6) that a local repository system be set up for access to and storage and archiving of the ETD files.

Current submission procedures at UA

- Editing: Dissertations and theses, after students' graduate committees have approved the documents, are submitted to the Graduate School where they are proofread and checked for adherence to formatting standards, prior to final approval by the Graduate School. There appears to be some variability among Departments with respect to the extent to which
dissertations and theses are edited by the student’s committee; the students have the option of hiring a Graduate School approved editor for proofing prior to final submission. Note below, in the section on ETD submission procedures, that ETD implementation will mean that greater responsibility for editing will be expected of Graduate Committees. Alternatively or in addition, Graduate School-approved proof-readers may be hired by the student or Department.

- **Thesis access and archiving:** After a thesis has been approved by the UA Graduate School, the UA Libraries receive two paper copies. Both copies are sent to the bindery; after bound copies are returned to the Libraries and cataloged, one copy is archived and the second is available for circulation. Currently, no embargo is imposed on print copies.

- **Dissertation access and archiving:** As for theses, two paper copies of each dissertation are sent to the Libraries after final approval by the Graduate School. One copy is immediately sent to the bindery. The second copy is sent to ProQuest where it is scanned and microfilmed. ProQuest is responsible for the storage and long-term preservation of the digital file. Individuals at ProQuest subscribing institutions have access to citation information, abstract, and, if not embargoed, the full text of the dissertation via the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (PQDT) database. The paper copy is then returned to the UA Libraries, where it, too, is submitted for binding. After cataloguing, one bound copy is archived and the second, placed in circulation. Currently, no embargo is imposed on print copies; however, students may indicate on a ProQuest publication form a specified embargo period. This form, signed by the student, is submitted by the Graduate School along with the dissertation through the library to ProQuest. ProQuest is responsible for placing the submitted material under embargo for the specified time period.

**Methods of submitting theses and dissertations electronically:**

In order to implement an ETD submission plan, The University of Alabama would need to 1) use an existing open source software such as the one developed at Virginia Tech, 2) use an existing proprietary software such as ProQuest online submission, or 3) develop our own system. The committee recommends use of the ProQuest service for several reasons.

1) The University of Alabama currently has a subscription to ProQuest and therefore no additional fees are charged for that service.

2) The committee found that the ProQuest service was the method most broadly utilized by institutions for ETD submission. This service has well-established and user-friendly access and provides technical support and help to students in uploading files and converting to PDF.

3) ProQuest supports multiple file formats including those likely to be used at UA (e.g. digital video, image files, ppt), and in fact, expands our options for file format in dissertations and theses.

4) ProQuest provides digital archiving. Archiving was an issue of great concern in our discussions and further discussion of this aspect of ETD is addressed below.

5) ProQuest also gives students the option of ordering bound copies if they or their Graduate Committee members wish to have paper copies of the document.
6) The most popular open source system for ETD appears to be the software developed and used by Virginia Tech. This software requires in-house administration and maintenance.
7) We found no other examples of institution specific ETD systems. It seems likely that devising our own software would not be worth the time and expense to develop, and maintain.

**The ETD submission process:**

1) Preparation for a thesis or dissertation would be standard to the discipline, according to current guidelines and acceptable platforms (e.g. Microsoft Word, music score, videos). Some institutions employ data entry templates which would minimize final copy formatting errors. However, the committee felt that this detail could be best be considered by the Graduate School at a later date, if ETD submission is approved and implemented.
2) The student defends and receives committee acceptance.
3) The Dissertation/The Thesis chair and committee members generally bear greater responsibility to ensure the final product is adequately edited since the thesis or dissertation is uploaded directly to the ProQuest site (though not published until final approval is received).
4) The signature page is protected and is NOT uploaded as part of dissertation/thesis file; options are to maintain a hard copy file or to scan it into a digital file. In either, the signature page would be archived and maintained in the Graduate School.
5) The student converts the dissertation or thesis to a pdf file and uploads the file with any supplementary materials in media formats.
6) The Graduate School does a "spot audit" to ensure adherence to formatting requirements and overall readability.
7) The Graduate School "submits" the file officially to ProQuest after approval.
8) A copy of the same file is delivered to the Libraries electronically during the submission process.
9) ProQuest catalogs, indexes, and publishes per permissions granted.
10) Options for release include delayed publication due to embargo for a defined time period, full access or restricted access.

**ETDs Access, storage, and archiving:**

Providing access to and implementing long-term preservation and archiving of ETD files are important components of ETD implementation. Access, storage, and archiving can be achieved both locally and through ProQuest.

- Locally: The UA Libraries are willing to provide storage and deposit ETD files into CONTENTdm for access. CONTENTdm is a digital collection management software currently used for other digital collections. The level of access is determined by the agreement signed by the students. For embargoed theses and dissertations, the Graduate School is responsible for tracking embargo time limits and notifying the Libraries when the embargoes are lifted. After mandatory ETD is implemented, the Libraries will no longer accept print copies for access or archiving. UA Libraries are in the process of developing a shared digital archive with other institutions in the state of Alabama. CONTENTdm collections will be included in this...
archive. There are costs associated with using CONTENTdm as well as storage and archiving that the University will need to consider.

- ProQuest: All users with ProQuest subscription have access to ETD full text in ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (PQDT) database. The level of access is determined by the signed publishing agreement between the student and ProQuest. Embargoed titles are limited to citation information and abstracts only. ProQuest also offers the Open Access publishing service for a fee from the student. With Open Access agreement, ProQuest makes the ETD available for free and open access. The long-term preservation strategy at ProQuest includes microfilming and digital back-up. In 1999, ProQuest and the Library of Congress entered into an agreement whereby the ProQuest Digital Dissertations Database was designated as an official off-site repository of the Library of Congress.

**Graduate School ETD website for students and ETD training:**

An ETD website portal at the Graduate School site will be necessary; the committee recommends simplicity and clarity with easily identified links to support materials. We found that ETD sites at other institutions varied considerably in ease of finding specific links, in density of information on pages, and in font style and size. These made a significant difference in finding and interpreting specific information. The Vanderbilt University ETD site (http://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu) is a good example of one that was quite easy to navigate. There are, however, several others (e.g., University of Kentucky and University of Maryland) that were also well-designed. Support materials recommended, based on our committee’s review of other ETD sites, include:

- ETD Overview (an explanation of submission process).
- Graduate School Style Guide/Formatting Requirements/Templates.
- Schedule of training sessions (conversion to PDF; Dissertation Preparation) to be held at least once each semester (similar to the current procedure).
- Online tutorials and online training presentations which would prove especially helpful to those students working from a distance.
- Link to ProQuest online submission.
- Special Cases (e.g., music, dance) See www.gradschool.umd.edu/etd, The University of Maryland ETD site for an example of how these are handled.
- Special Templates (e.g., LaTeX)
- Tips Page (e.g., recommendation to students to use non-proprietary formats for multimedia objects and to fully document non-text aspects should there be file migration issues).
- Deadlines
- List of 10-20 (at least) Graduate School approved readers/editors, if editing responsibilities reside with the committee, department or college.
Comparative costs of tradition paper and ETD submission:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional</th>
<th>ETD</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest Copyright Service (optional)</td>
<td>$65</td>
<td>$65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation Binding Fee</td>
<td>$25</td>
<td>$0 (unless student chooses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest Microfilming and Abstract Fee (Traditional Publishing)</td>
<td>$65 (dissertation)  $55 (thesis)</td>
<td>$65 (dissertation) $55 (thesis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing Estimate*</td>
<td>$66</td>
<td>$0 (unless student chooses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Including copyright service option</td>
<td>$221 (dissertation) $211 (thesis)</td>
<td>$130 (dissertation) $120 (thesis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not including copyright service option</td>
<td>$156 (dissertation) $146 (thesis)</td>
<td>$65 (dissertation) $55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProQuest Open Access Publishing including Traditional Publishing (optional)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>$158 (dissertation) $147 (thesis)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2 Dissertations at 300 pages per dissertation = 600 pages; 100% cotton paper; $.11 per copy from University Printing) = $66.

Other specific issues and concerns:

1) **Publication embargos**: These are often required for dissertations or theses that are associated with pending patents or publication. Presently, students can choose, during the ETD upload process, to embargo their work for 6 months to 2 years. The committee
recommends that a 3 year option be added as patent applications can sometimes require longer than 2 years for processing.

2) **Maintaining permissions**: Related to embargoes and other works in which permissions for free access must be obtained, the student scans the permission letter and uploads it as a supplemental file, with a note in the “Notes to Administrator” field in ProQuest.

3) **Other formats**: Documents from some disciplines within the University may not readily convert from Word to pdf and therefore use other formats, such as LaTex. Templates for LaTex and other special considerations will need to be addressed in the future, but it appears that individuals having these needs can work with ProQuest to facilitate file conversions.

4) **File size and type limitations**: Separate instructions and templates would need to be available for other special cases, such as some submissions in music or theatre. Since ProQuest can take multiple types of files including word processed files, presentation files, digital video and audio files, such special case submissions may in fact have a greater breadth of options. There appear to be no file size limits, but this issue may need to be addressed in the future.

5) **Effect of ETD on deadlines**: With ETD submissions in place, the committee expects that the deadline for defenses and graduate school submissions could be altered to later dates.

6) **Costs to UA**: There will be costs to the Libraries associated with providing access to and storage and archiving of the ETD files. Further discussion with the Libraries will be required to determine the cost level and budgetary issues.

7) **Editing**: The details of editing requirements, responsibilities, and certifications will require discussion and implementation of guidelines by the Graduate School.

**Resources/other ETD sites:**

a) ProQuest (http://www.proquest.com/products_umi/dissertations)

b) UAB (http://main.uab.edu/Sites/gradschool/students/current/theses/)

c) The University of Florida (http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/etd.html)

d) The University of Kentucky (http://www.uky.edu/ETD/)

e) The University of Maryland (http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/etd/)

f) Maryland’s ProQuest submission site (http://dissertations.umi.com/umd/)

g) The University of Georgia (http://www.libs.uga.edu/etd/)

h) Vanderbilt University (http://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu/)

i) Also, there is a wealth of information at http://etdguide.org/etdguide.pdf -- *The Guide for Electronic Theses and Dissertations.*

j) Robert McDonald also has some valuable information and links to ETDs at http://rmcdonald.info/etd/.