

# Electronic Theses & Dissertations: A Survey of Editors and Publishers



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- Widely disseminated ETDs and concerns about subsequent publishing opportunities in scholarly journals.
- Stated policies on ‘prior publication’ in 200 established academic journals.
- What does it mean to ‘publish’ in the electronic academic environment? Kling’s categories.
- Survey results summarized
- Some conclusions

# Survey results from Virginia Tech 1997 -1999

## ACCESS STATUS

48% of the students chose unrestricted access to their ETDs

33% of the students chose to restrict access to university community

19% made their ETDs inaccessible to all for a set period of time

## GRADUATE STUDENT SURVEY

78% of students decided to limit access on the advice of faculty

13% of students decided to limit access on the advice of publishers

## ALUMNI SURVEYS

43% of graduates successfully published derivative works

100% of graduates found no resistance from publishers

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## **The survey population**

Editors & Publishers from:

Academic Press  
American Chemical Society  
American Society for Microbiology  
Springer-Verlag  
Wiley & Sons  
MCB University Press  
University of Chicago Press  
FASEB

Kluwer Academic  
Elsevier Science  
American Psychological Assoc.  
Amer. Soc. Of Mechanical Engineers  
Cambridge University Press  
Institute of Physics Journals  
IEEE  
Blackwell Science

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## The survey population

Review of stated policies given on web sites from 200 journals:

- 15% - had no specific statement regarding prior or duplicate publication
- 49% - had standard policy on restrictions with respect to prior publication
- 21% - had standard policy, with certain **exceptions** noted
  - e.g.: “except as an abstract or as part of a lecture, review or academic thesis”
- 15% - had standard policy, with certain **inclusions** noted (e-publications)
  - e.g. “This policy also applies to material submitted for publication in an electronic data base system of a public nature, which we constitute prior publication.” *Biochemistry [ACS]*

“Publication in any reasonably retrievable source constitutes prior publication”  
(*Biotechnology and Bioengineering – Wiley*)

# Kling's Classification of Electronic Journals

## 1. Hybrid Paper-Electronic Journal:

a package of peer-reviewed articles available through electronic channels, but whose primary distribution channels are paper-based (e.g.: *Journal of Neuroscience*; *the Journal of Biological Chemistry*)

## 2. Electronic Working Articles:

electronic scholarly communications that are not peer-reviewed and are given a variety of labels: e-prints, working papers, electronic magazines. (e.g.: *Los Alamos Pre-Print Archive of high-energy physics*)

## 3. Electronic Journals:

defined as an edited package of articles that is distributed to most of its subscribers in electronic form. In most cases, no paper journal exists. (e.g.: *Psychology*, *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*.)

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## Summary of Survey Responses

Editors and publishers were contacted by email, given a brief background on ETDs and the NDLTD, and were requested to participate in the online survey available at  
<http://lumiere.lib.vt.edu/surveys/>

- 46 responded by completing the survey
- 8 offered opinions by email without completing the survey
- Response rate: 27%

## Summary of survey responses

- 95% Editor, Associate Editor, or Editorial Director
- 4% Publisher
- 1% Publications Chair or Officer
  
- 73% Not-for-profit publications
- 27% For-profit publications
  
- 94% of respondents stated that the journal did have a policy on *prior publication* which was explicit in ‘Guidelines to Contributors’ pages
  
- 68% responded that the policies **did not** specifically refer to work which was posted on the Web or otherwise made electronically available



## Summary of survey responses:

# Respondents by Broad Discipline Classification:

## Physical Sciences (39%)

- including: Physics, Chemistry, Engineering, Astronomy, Environmental Sciences

## Life Sciences (34%)

- including: Biology, Biochemistry, Biophysics, Mycology, Genetics, Botany

## Medical Sciences (10%)

- including: Physiology, Gastroenterology, Neurology, Immunology

## Social Sciences (9%)

- including: Psychology, Business, Marketing

- also Mathematics, Computer Science, and Comprehensive (PNAS)

## Summary of survey responses

*According to the editorial policy of the journal(s), which of the following would constitute 'prior publication' in electronic format? Please indicate by selecting as many as are applicable.*

- Online thesis or dissertation widely available through a web-based archive
- Online thesis or dissertation with access limited to campus or institution.
- Research results available through a pre-print server (i.e. Los Alamos)
- Research results available on a personal homepage prior to peer-review
- Conference proceedings available through a web-based server
- All of the above
- None of the above
- Other - please elaborate:

## Summary of survey responses

### Physical Sciences:

55% - None of the above

16% - Conferences proceedings via web-based server

11% - Research results available through a pre-print server

5% - *Online thesis or dissertation widely available through a web-based server*

### Life Sciences

63% - Conference proceedings via web-based server

56% - Research results via a pre-print server

25% - *Online thesis or dissertation widely available through a web-based server*

18% - Research results available on a personal homepage prior to peer review

### Medical Sciences

25% - All of the above

25% - *Online thesis or dissertation widely available through a web-based server*

25% - Conference proceedings via web-based server

### Social Sciences

50% - Research results via a pre-print server

50% - Research results via personal homepage prior to peer-review

25% - *Online thesis or dissertation widely available through a web-based server*

## Summary of survey responses

Criteria used to identify what is considered ‘published’ in electronic format as it relates to manuscripts submitted to scholarly journals:

1. Peer review
2. Level of access / dissemination
3. Revision of content
4. Stability of format

## Summary of survey responses

‘Other’ responses to question of what constitutes *prior publication* in an electronic environment, and the related criteria:

### 1. Peer review:

*“Anything that has been peer-reviewed prior to publication”*

### 2. Level of Access:

*“I would consider web-based publishing to be publishing since it is ‘broadcasting’ information”*

### 3. Revision of content:

*“If [the choices listed] are essentially identical to the manuscript submitted, it would represent prior publication”*

### 4. Stability of format:

*“We do not recognise web based publications as formally published. Web-based publication does not constitute a stable form of publication that is citable as a reference”*

## Summary of survey responses

### **Physical Sciences**

Essentially *non-restrictive* with respect to the question of prior publication in electronic format. Peer review was most frequently cited criteria in determining what was “published”.

### **Life Sciences**

Emphasis was primarily on the *level of access or dissemination* to an electronic document when determining whether it constituted prior publication. Followed closely by peer review as essential criteria.

### **Medical Sciences**

Emphasis on *level of access or dissemination*, followed by peer review.

### **Social Sciences:**

Emphasis was on *revision of content*, that material be ‘derived’ but not a duplication of what was available online.

## Summary of survey responses

*According to the editorial policy governing the journal(s) identified, under which of the following circumstances would a manuscript derived from a web-based dissertation be considered for publication?*

Under no circumstances. Manuscripts from dissertations would be considered considered previously published, regardless of format.

Under no circumstances. Research made widely available via the WWW would be considered previously published.

Only if the online dissertation has access limited to the campus or institution where completed.

Only if the contents and conclusions in the manuscript were substantially different from the dissertation.

Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would be considered on an individual basis.

Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would be welcomed for submission.

Other - please elaborate:

## Summary of survey responses

### **Physical Sciences:**

61% - Manuscripts ... would be welcomed for submission

16% - Manuscripts ... would be considered on an individual basis

5% - Only if the dissertation has access limited to the campus or institution

### **Life Sciences**

37% - Manuscripts ... would be considered on an individual basis

31% - Manuscripts ... would be welcomed for submission

12% – Under no circumstances

12% - Only if the dissertation has access limited to the campus or institution

12% - Other – “presently being evaluated”

### **Medical Sciences**

25% - Manuscripts ... would be considered on an individual basis

25% - Manuscripts ... would be welcomed for submission

25% - Only if the online access was limited to campus or institution

### **Social Sciences:**

75% - Manuscripts ... would be welcomed for submission

25% - Other – “policy has not yet been set on this issue”



## Summary of survey responses

### Encouraging comments from Editors & Publishers:

Mark Hermodson, Editor – *Protein Science*

“I view theses as completely different form of publication. We expect that the results will eventually be published and do not discriminate against the student because the thesis is widely available.”

Karen Hunter, Senior Vice-President – *Elsevier Science*

“ We believe that distribution as a dissertation is sufficiently different from a publication in a refereed journal to not be of concern.”

Nora S. Newcombe, Editor – *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*

“I would see electronic availability of a thesis as only equivalent to what has long been available through microfilm and as not constituting prior publication.”

Peter Moore, Editor – *Biophysical Journal*

“... anyone can post anything they want on the web without compromising the acceptability of that material for subsequent submission to BJ UNLESS posting on the site requires that the material pass through some kind of peer review. In this case, it becomes no longer acceptable for submission.”

## Summary of survey responses

Richard Smith, Editor – *British Medical Journal*

“Communication in science and medicine will not be well served by standing in the way of publication in many versions, and the *British Medical Journal* is willing to consider for publication eprints that have been posted on websites so long as their status as eprints is clear. In the meantime, authors, editors and publishers have more work to do to make the status of articles entirely clear. This is the age of transparency rather than paternalism.”