

Multimedia ETD's: Challenges For Management

A panel:

Brian Nielsen

Tony Cargnelutti

John Hagen

Bill Savage

Abstract:

The growing acceptance of ETD's in academia offers more doctoral students opportunities to include informational elements in their dissertations beyond what can be represented in traditional, paper, dissertations. Sound, color images, video, and visualizations of data are among the media that can be presented as integral parts of the dissertation itself rather than as separately-handled supplements or appendices, and the institutional management of dissertations with such elements presents new challenges for libraries, other information technology and administrative infrastructures, and doctoral committees. This panel will address these challenges, offering administrative and technical experience that might help guide the larger ETD community toward more experimentation, research, and dialogue in this area.

Panel Participants

- Brian Nielsen, Academic Technologies, Northwestern University
- Tony Cargnelutti, University of New South Wales Library
- John Hagen, Library Technical Consultant, West Virginia University
- Bill Savage, Proquest, Inc.

Northwestern University Experience

- Currently in pilot, with ~20 grad students and their committees
- pdf selected as acceptable format, to ease handling issues
- html-based dissertations deprecated
- Strong interest in media-enriched dissertations in the Radio/TV/Film department

What management challenges do multimedia ETD's present?

- File management
- Delivery constraints
- Preservation
- Standards for representation
- Who is on the "dissertation production team"?

File Management Issues

- Multiple files must be tracked
- Links must be retained
- Link specification
 - Typically dependent on a file system
 - *OR* Use a Content management system
- Training and support for link construction: At what phase of the dissertation authoring?

Delivery constraints

- Media file sizes
- Will streaming be supported?
- Appropriate plug-ins or runtime players for special formats
- Installation and licensing requirements for associated players

Long-term preservation issues

- What is the appropriate shelf-life of a dissertation?
 - Libraries and their parent institutions have treated paper dissertations with special consideration for *long* life: acid-free papers, bibliographic control, use of UMI for distribution, etc..
- Migration in file formats is not expected to occur at a uniform pace
 - The bar gets raised frequently for quality standards of presentation media (video, sound, etc.), while the text may be fairly immutable

Standards for representation

- We have *very* elaborate standards for representation of scholarly apparatus (footnotes, bibliography, etc.)
- Will there be standards for multimedia apparatus?

The Dissertation Production Team

- Requirements specifications: the weight of tradition, the Graduate School as gatekeeper
- The committee: with authorial options expanding very rapidly, are committee members the right editors?
- Technical capacities for advanced media handling are not accessible to authors until after the defense

For Discussion

- Who can/will articulate draft standards?
- At what point in the authoring stage will advanced storage technologies become available to dissertators?
- Will committees accept the enlargement of the approval team?