

Trends in the development of E-Theses in India: issues, constraints, and solutions

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Abstract

This paper summarizes current developments of e-theses in India and discusses barriers to implementation and proposes a model plan to speed up the process. If recent guidelines from the University Grants Commission of India encouraging the submission of e-theses for deposit are universally adopted; India will see a proliferation of institutional repositories in the country. There are a few institutes such as the Indian Institute of Science, Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai (IITB) already spearheading the deposit process whereas a few others like Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, National Chemical Laboratories, University of Hyderabad and some other public and private institutions have joined the deposit process. Current national level initiatives such as bibliographic records of PhD theses at INFLIBNET or the Vidyanidhi project at University of Mysore, designed to act as a national repository for e-theses are yet to become comprehensive and authentic sources of information for all PhD theses submitted to Indian Universities. Also, e-theses repositories pose major challenges to Libraries and to research scholars. Some of these challenges include concerns about plagiarism, copyright violations, quality of theses, lack of policy changes at university level, poor infrastructure, inadequate technical skills of library staff in installation, maintenance, and customization of institutional repository software, knowledge of Unix and Linux operating systems, and limited understanding of using metadata schemes and copyright issues. Current institutional repositories training programmes in the country are inadequate in number and only expose the participants to such software and do not empower the participants with the practical knowledge of using these software. Another significant issue is the lack of adequate and suitable programmes available to train working library professionals in IPR issues. An action plan is proposed to spearhead e-theses in India which includes short-term training on open source software and IPR for library staff of university and R&D institutes, availability of customized software with innovative features as seen in sites like ETD@IISc, creation of paid or free consultation facility and blogs, creation of templates for Web sites for e-thesis submission, recommended classification scheme for thesis to explore systems like Urkund or Genuine Text for locating potential plagiarism. It is further suggested that institutes like NCSI, DRTC, INFLIBNET, and a few others engaged in training library professionals can play a significant role in e-theses depositories growth in India.