

User-Generated Metadata for ETDs: Added Value for Libraries

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Abstract

Theses Canada, the Canadian national theses program, was established at the National Library of Canada¹ in 1965 before computers became ubiquitous in the home and workplace and the Internet was just a dream on the horizon. Its goal was and continues to be twofold: to facilitate access to theses and dissertations approved by Canadian universities and to preserve them in the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) collection. In 2002, as the result of a consultation with Canadian universities, Theses Canada undertook to develop a national electronic theses program based on the principle of open access. In January 2004 the Theses Canada Portal was launched, providing access to over 45,000 Canadian electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) acquired from ProQuest, which began to digitize them from print theses in 1998 under the terms of its contract with LAC. However, in order to more fully integrate ETDs into the national program on an ongoing basis, Library and Archives Canada concurrently developed the capacity to harvest both ETDs and metadata from universities using the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH). The longevity of the national theses program provided a firm foundation for collaboration between LAC and its university partners in building the interoperability infrastructure that the OAI-PMH requires. LAC is currently harvesting metadata and ETDs from seven Canadian universities and expects to harvest other universities as they establish their ETD programs. While Theses Canada's primary objective in developing its harvesting program was to provide open access to Canadian ETDs it has had unexpected fringe benefits. Graduate students supply the initial metadata for their theses and dissertations at the time they submit the final versions to their universities. This paper will discuss the added value service that user-generated metadata for ETDs provides to libraries.

¹ Now part of Library and Archives Canada