

# Opening access and closing risk: delivering the mandate for e-theses deposit

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## Abstract

The University of Southampton has a well established Institutional Research Repository (e-Prints Soton) with an embedded culture of deposit for research material for many discipline areas.<sup>1</sup> This paper explores the recent mandate to intergrate the electronic deposit of PhD and MPhil theses into the existing submission processes from the perspective of the students, the Academic Schools and the Institutional Repository. It examines the complex workflow issues for 23 Schools and cross-disciplinary research centres, covering the full range of academic subjects and the embedding of the theses deposits into the work of the repository team. Technical benefits and challenges are explored, particularly where there is a link between research and teaching. The PhD is conceptually ideally placed to facilitate this and supporting links to library catalogues and virtual learning environments like Blackboard is a key development. As many students progress into the research environment the open access e-thesis deposit adds value by exposing their research early and the Repository supports their ongoing research with export functions to CVs, grant proposals and personal home pages. Projects such as CLADDIER<sup>2</sup> are exploring the potential of linking data to research, including theses, with the overall aim of total access to all the components of the research process. At the University of Southampton this holistic view of research has incorporated economic issues as well as socio-cultural developments. Failure to protect Intellectual Property is a key concern and planning the changes in institutional processes to support e-theses has necessitated a fully joined-up approach between administrators and researchers, legal and research support staff, the Library and the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit. Risk management has drawn on diverse expertise to develop a workable non-bureaucratic process with relevant safeguards. It is only with such a safety net that people will truly feel confident about engaging fully with open access.

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<sup>1</sup> University of Southampton Research Repository, e-Prints Soton <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/> [accessed on 14/2/07] with a total of 22885 records, approximately 15% with full text/image. Metadata only records have been added to support the UK Research Assessment exercise but the proportion of records deposited with full text is increasing.

<sup>2</sup> The JISC funded CLADDIER project in which the University of Southampton is a partner, <http://claddier.badc.ac.uk/trac> [accessed on 14/2/07]