

PLENARY SESSIONS

ABSTRACTS

FEATURED SPEAKER AND OPEN ACCESS PLENARY PANEL SESSION

- » Moderator: Patrick Conner, Professor in English / Director, West Virginia University Press
- » Thursday, June 12 9:30 a.m.–10:45 a.m.

Publishing, Open Access and ETD: A Panel Session on Student, Faculty and Publisher Perspectives

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The programming language, JAVA, which transformed the Internet, was introduced to the world at the Netscape Developer's Conference in San Francisco over thirteen years ago on March 5-7, 1996. At the time, those of us present were told that the future would require three dimensions for every resource we produced: everything would have to be interactive, ubiquitous, and distributed. A resource is said to be "interactive" when the user provides significant input or direction and the resource reacts dynamically and appropriately. A resource is said to be "ubiquitous" when it (or a major component of it) is both available everywhere and recognized everywhere as the best means of addressing the problem it is designed to handle. A resource is "distributed" when its components and the responsibility for them are variously located, and not required to reside on a single server.

A complete acquisition of these three properties still drives the development of the Internet and these same properties should drive the development of dissertations online more surely than they now do, but it's important to keep all three dimensions in perspective, to remember what a dissertation is for, and to understand a variety of needs tied to dissertations in order to aid our effort to move the development of ETDs and to bring dissertations to the next level. The NDLTD is striving to be ubiquitous, but it has not reached that point, nor has it neared the tipping point that would precede it; certainly, we can say that ETDs are distributed via the NDLTD, but a certain amount of fear among dissertation writers and directors has worked against fully open

access and distribution. When a dissertation is embargoed to a single institution or campus, it is not distributed.

Finally, I come back to the first term, interactive. Our theses and dissertations are, by and large, digitized paper documents utilizing PDFs, and every theorist I know of the future of textuality will argue for the advent of interactive dimensions that we have not tried to develop. I see the shortcomings in these dimensions as symptoms of a problem that derives from two related situations: we dissertation-producing faculty seem agreed only in seeing a dissertation or thesis as the production that will certify a single student's degree, which diminishes collaboration to even less than the amount a good typist provided before the days of word-processing; moreover, we use the term "to publish" as loosely, if not more loosely, than we use the term "to edit," to the degree that, most of the time when we speak to each other about these things, we're talking about entirely different concepts.

Not only do we need to remedy both of these openly and in an organized fashion in order to advance the production of ETDs generally and the NDLTD specifically, but we need to do so in order to advance the forms scholarship should generally be taking at our universities, colleges, institutes and laboratories.

- » Panelist: Cynthia Miller, Director, University of Pittsburgh Press
- » Panelist: Clare Connors, University of Pittsburgh

PLATFORMS / DEMOS PLENARY PANEL SESSION

- » Moderator: Peter Schirnbacher, Humboldt University
- » Thursday, June 12 3 p.m.–4 p.m.

OpenThesis.org: A Universal ETD Database with Search, Organization, Collaboration and Print Capabilities

- » Panelist: James Ryley, Founder and President, OpenThesis.org, Patents Online, LLC

Theses and Dissertations have long been inaccessible due to lack of a free, powerful interface to search all of these documents in a single location. OpenThesis.org, a new Web site from the creators of FreePatentsOnline.com, aims to expose all theses and