Current ETD practices and workflows in North Carolina

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ETD 2009 — bridging the knowledge divide

Introduction

The authors, from different departments at one university, both showed up at an OETDA conference without knowing the other was attending. We asked each other if the Libraries and the Graduate School might benefit from greater communication, and then: How do other institutions offering electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) handle the inter-departmental communication and collaboration needs of such programs? This study examines current practices among ETD administrators in North Carolina and in current national literature, with special attention to communication, collaboration, workflows, and divisions of labor.

Methods

Survey: A brief, 15-question survey went to twenty-three individuals identified on institution's web sites as involved in the ETD process.

Literature review: We surveyed current (since 2003) library and higher education articles on collaboration, workflows, and divisions of labor in ETD programs.

Institution	Grad school contact person	Library contact person	Info Tech (IT) contact person
Appalachian State	1	1	
Duke University	1	1	
East Carolina	2	2	1
N.C. State	1	1	
UNC Chapel Hill	1	2	
UNC Charlotte	2	1	
UNC Greensboro	1	1	
UNC Wilmington	1	1	
Wake Forest University	1	1	
Western Carolina	1	2	
TOTAL	12	13	1

Figure 1. Survey participants

Findings

Overview: Thirty-seven NC institutions offer at least one advanced degree; most require a thesis or dissertation. Thirteen (35%) accept or require electronic submission. Our survey went to twenty-three email addresses at those thirteen.

Is electronic submission of theses and/or dissertations required or optional at your institution?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Required	64%	7
Optional	36%	4
Varies by academic unit	0%	0

Figure 2. Is electronic required?

Three emails bounced, twelve of the remaining twenty responded to the survey, and ten completed it, so 50% of recipients completed the survey. We discuss the most interesting and relevant findings. Information on UNCG is included in some charts for a more complete picture of NC ETD institutions. All respondents say their graduate school is involved in ETD, and most say the library is involved. Campus or library IT personnel are frequently involved, but academic departments rarely are.

Which departments are involved in administering ETD at your institution?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Graduate School	100%	11
Library	73%	8
IT Department	18%	2
IT in Library	18%	2
Academic Departments	9%	1

Figure 3. Departments involved

Question: Describe collaboration and communication

25% choose "none," 50% say "frequent," and all respondents rate communication and collaboration identically. Their importance in developing programs shows in the literature and in a respondent's comment: "We established an ETD working group that met several times a semester in the beginning; less frequent now that the process is up and running smoothly."
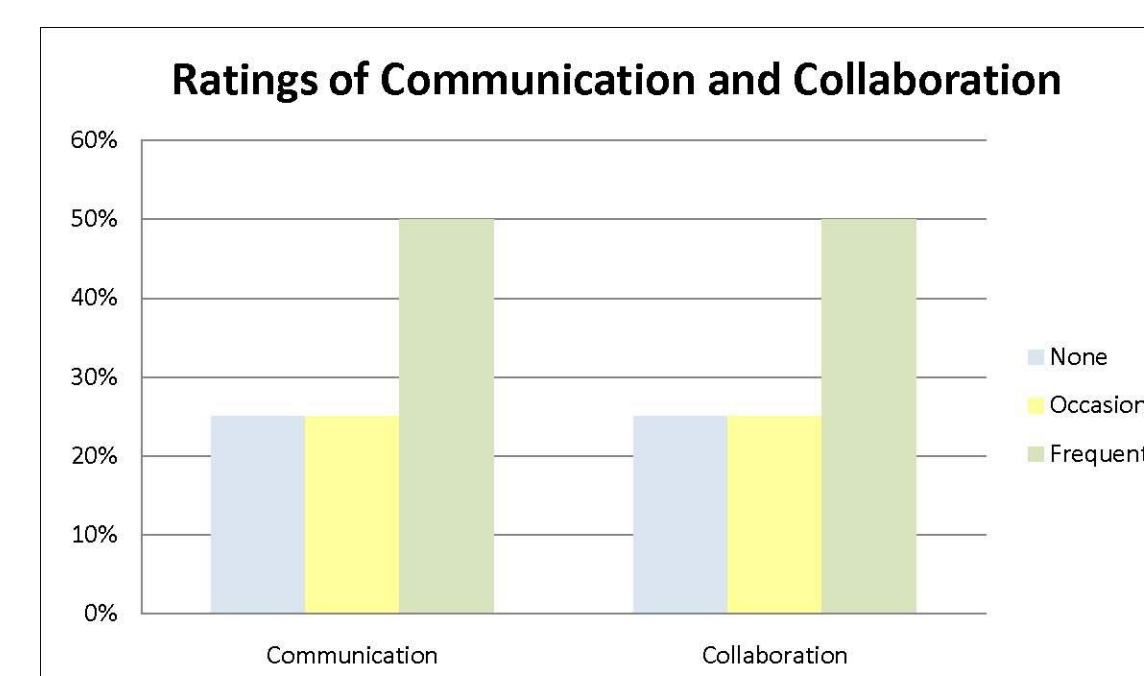
Question: Which personnel perform what ETD tasks?

We asked for position titles, not names, but departments might have been the more useful information. Our chart color-codes for department when that could be determined. ETD tasks are evenly split between graduate schools and other areas, with libraries strongly represented. (Archives is color-coded as library.) Notable: one institution's grad school executive assistant is responsible for every ETD task. And, had we asked respondents to specify the "other" tasks, we would know what a digital repository librarian *does* with ETDs at another school.

Student training	Thesis review and approval	Creation/maintenance of website for submission/storage of files	Uploading of files (to ProQuest or to institutional repository)	Metadata creation (including cataloging)	Other
not applicable	Grad School Exec Asst	Grad School Exec Asst	Grad School Exec Asst	Grad School Exec Asst	
	Admin Support Assoc	Division Tech Analyst	Admin Support Assoc		
Library Staff	Grad School Admin Asst	Asst. Head Technology, library	student	student	
Thesis Editor	Thesis Editor	Library	Not sure -- ProQuest?	Library	
Graduate School	Grad School	Library			
T & D Editor / Grad Coord	T & D Editor / Grad Coord	Systems Librarian		T & D Editor/Grad Coord	Digital Repository Librarian
joint Grad school/ library employee	Grad School asst	Grad School asst	University Archives and asst	Archives harvests from ProQuest	
graduate school	academic departments	graduate school	library		
dean	student services	UMI	dean	library	
Grad school *	Grad school *	Library IT *	Grad school *	Library *	

* Answer given is for UNCG and not a survey respondent

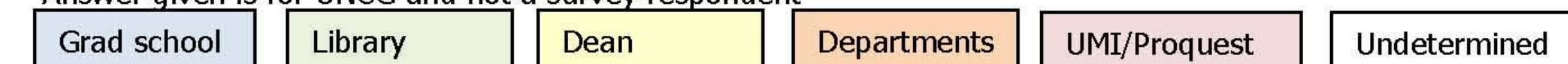Grad school | Library | Dean | Departments | UMI/Proquest | Undetermined

Figure 4. Divisions of labor in NC ETD programs

Question: Workflows

A request for copies of written procedures yielded disappointing results, but we can provide some detail from responses about individual stages of the process. For example, four of the seven answering say ETDs are uploaded singly as they are completed; three of the seven say they are uploaded in one batch. Results of the division of labor questions (table above) show who performs the uploads.

Once submitted and approved, are ETDs uploaded to the vendor and/or server?		
Answer Options	Response Frequency	Response Count
Singly, as they are completed	57.1%	4
All at once, as a batch	42.9%	3

Figure 6. Uploads

Conclusion

This survey reveals the variety of structures and procedures in ETD programs in NC, but also many commonalities; like primary involvement of both graduate school and library, immediate public access, converging trends in digital storage, and written procedures or workflows. Results also show language issues caused respondents to interpret questions differently than we had intended. Future research could more accurately pinpoint ETD processes in the detail necessary to make more specific recommendations for improvement. Still, no matter the variety of systems for managing ETDs, or how automated or mature the program, clearly it remains imperative that departments establish and maintain a regular dialogue to share perspectives, new ideas and technologies, and suggestions for improvement.

Ratings of Communication and Collaboration

None | Occasional | Frequent

Figure 5. Communication & collaboration