Surveying ETD Infrastructure Needs: From Author to End User

Megan Sheffield[*†1] and Andrew Wesolek[1]

[1]Clemson University – United States

Abstract

Clemson University is a medium-sized public land-grant institution located in the Up-state region of South Carolina. The University adopted an electronic thesis and dissertation program in 2006. In the initiative's first iteration, ETDs were submitted by students through the Graduate School to ProQuest. ProQuest then transmitted metadata and ETD PDFs to the library, where they were archived in a home-grown open access database. In 2013, the Libraries migrated this database to a newly launched DigitalCommons- supported institutional repository. The confluence of a new institutional repository, new leadership in both the Libraries and the Graduate School, and impending data management and public access policies emanating from major funding agencies prompted us to reflect on both the data management needs of our students and faculty, as well as the end users of our open access ETDs.

To that end, Clemson University Librarians conducted two surveys. First, in late 2012, Librarians surveyed Clemson graduate students and faculty to better understand their data management needs. Respondents were asked fifteen questions about the type, size and storage methods of the data they generated through research conducted at the university. The results were used internally, to help guide policy decisions and develop infrastructure and services to assist our community in managing their research data. The results, though potentially applicable to other institutions, have not been previously shared publicly.

Additionally, one might argue that a thesis or dissertation is more than a project. It is an affirmation that the graduate can participate in, and meaningfully contribute to, the scholarly dialog in his or her field. With this understanding, the end-users of theses and dissertations become key to the progression of the scholarly dialog. Much literature and anecdotal evidence has indicated that theses and dissertations are among the top used items in institutional repositories. However, little is known about who these end users are, and what value they are deriving from electronic theses and dissertations.

Clemson Librarians ran a second survey, which concluded in December of 2015 to provide a snapshot of the users of its theses and dissertations. The "1-minute survey" asks researchers to identify their primary role, the reason they are downloading a thesis or dissertation, and whether or not they were aware that graduate students produced the research. In addition, the IP addresses of the respondents give us an insight into their country of origin.

Taken in combination, these surveys give a broad overview of the infrastructure needs of

---

[*]Speaker
[†]Corresponding author: msheff@CLEMSON.EDU

ETD authors, as well as the perspectives of ETD end-users. At Clemson, as we begin to make policy decisions related to our ETD initiative, these surveys will provide valuable guidance, as well as applicability beyond our institution.

On the author:

Andrew Wesolek currently serves as Head of Digital Scholarship at Clemson University. In this role, he envisions and leads Clemson's Digital Scholarship initiatives, including the management of an institutional repository and scholarly publishing platform, the digitization of university records and the cultural heritage of the Upstate region of South Carolina, as well as serving as a University resource for copyright education and compliance. Wesolek remains professionally active with the American Library Association, Scholarly Publishing and Resource Coalition, and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, and as a founding Co-Editor-in-Chief of the forthcoming *Journal of Copyright in Education and Librarianship*.

Megan is an academic librarian at Clemson University. She specializes in reference, instruction, and collection development for the sciences; scholarly communication; and data management. She has an MLS from the University of Maryland and an MS in Biological Sciences from Clemson University.