

Title: A case study analysis of the accessibility, dissemination, networked infrastructure, and alignment for scholarly communication through ETDs for postgraduate research in South African universities

Background and Introduction

The implementation and role of IRs have greatly improved electronic publishing, dissemination, and visibility of the electronic dissemination of post-graduate theses and dissertations worldwide. The electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) collections curated in institutional repositories provide a knowledge bank that can easily be accessed by local and international research communities and is searchable across all fields of research.

Since the establishment of e-repositories by South African academic libraries, there has been a digital shift in ensuring new policies are in place for the reporting of theses and dissertation submissions, new workflows and procedures are shared between faculties and libraries, the establishment of institutional repository teams, and the set-up of digital ETD platforms are recognized as postgraduate research resources by both students and supervisors.

Behind, the drive to ensure ETDs are shared across universities, as open access (OA) initiative in South Africa, the Committee of Higher Education Libraries of South Africa (CHELSA), aims to improve library and information services for public higher education and research in South Africa, established the National Electronic Theses and Dissertation platform in 2009.

As a step to review the progress made so far by universities in implementing their mandates to curate and disseminate ETDs, this paper will seek to establish how theses and dissertations policies have been updated, whether accessibility and use of these research resources have improved and how postgraduate students and supervisors are complying with new ETD policies at the institutional and national level.

Objective

The paper will seek to establish the challenges that continue to block the establishment of a National Repository of Theses and Dissertations in South Africa, as a central repository of ETDs from all universities in South Africa. It will also attempt to leverage the value of the repository networking and integration, to equip repositories with a wider array of roles and functionalities, which can be enabled through new levels of web-centric interoperability.

Methods (a brief of methods employed/or to be employed to collect and analyse data)

Information will be collected on the main characteristics of repositories in South African public universities and the value-added services they offer, using a checklist with thirty items divided into four dimensions: information on the repository; information on the records; institutional policies, and instructions for use and

dissemination. The study will adopt a mixed-methods research approach. The mixed-methods design which is a method that includes both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis in parallel form (concurrent mixed method design in which two types of data are collected and analyzed in sequential form) will be employed. The use of mixed data (numerical and text) and alternative tools (statistics and analysis), will be applied. The researcher(s) will use the qualitative research paradigm for one phase of a study and a quantitative research paradigm for another phase of the study.

Expected results and study contribution (what are the anticipated results of the study and who should benefit)

Interpretation of the results will dwell on growth, sustainability, and use of repositories at the institutional, national and global access levels. This is likely to be the first study to review all higher educational ETD repositories in South Africa.

Conclusions

The authors believe that the provision of value-added services will have a direct impact on repository use, influence the implementation of dedicated networked national ETD services, which would be reliable as a useful resource for verification of postgraduate registered and completed projects, to prevent duplication.

Authors:

1. Mr. Lazarus Matzirofa, Deputy Director, Department of Library Services, University of Pretoria, email: lazarus.matzirofa@upp.ac.za, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0021-2738>
2. Dr Daisy Selematsela, University Librarian, Email: daisy.selematsela@wits.ac.za, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9035-1319>