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UNLOCKING SCHOLARLY ACCESS: MIGRATING TRADITIONAL DISSERTATIONS INTO ELECTRONIC THESES AND DISSERTATIONS (ETDS): A CASE STUDY OF TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

ETDs are the most invisible form of useful literature and the most useful form of invisible literature. This paper provides useful advice on the issues that will arise as institutions go through the process of introducing the mandatory submission of electronic theses. It is clear that most of the issues that have arisen at TISS will be mirrored at other institutions that are considering the same changes, and so those institutions looking at the area of e-thesis submission may gain some useful insights. The paper also highlights the common barriers in building the ETDs and benefits of ETDs. In the end how to secure the theses and dissertations from the possible copy, paste & print features have been discussed.

Keywords: Electronic media, electronic theses, dissertations, Institutional libraries, Academic libraries, India

INTRODUCTION

Theses and dissertations are known to be the rich and unique source of information, often the only source of research work that does not find its way into various publication channels. Theses and dissertations remain an un-tapped and under-utilized asset, leading to unnecessary duplication and repetition that, in effect, is the anti-theses of research and wastage of huge resources, both human and financial.

Electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) are a relatively new mode of research and scholarly communication. Lippincott states that an ETD program provides a process, standards, and software to automate functions, as well as a digital infrastructure for access and preservation (Lippincott, 2006). As a primary source of information, theses and dissertations are particularly useful to researchers, but many languish in obscurity in university libraries and archives. Digital library technologies have helped ETDs gain momentum (Jin, 2004). Theses submitted in support of a PhD are difficult to access, as they are only collected by the library of the university that granted the degree. ETDs can be easily located, readily accessible, and delivered over the Web (Vijaykumar and Murthy, 2001). Most university libraries are very enthusiastic about electronic theses, but thesis supervisors and university administrators have sometimes been less keen on the idea. In most cases, it is necessary to change university regulations in order to require students to deposit an electronic copy of their thesis, which can be a time-consuming and frustrating process (Greig, 2005). This paper attempts to view the status of use and adoption of ETDs in various different parts of the country, and gives a brief history of ETDs, key issues governing ETD projects, potential merits of ETDs, with a glimpse on ETD initiatives in India.

Theses and dissertations are known to be the rich and unique source of information, often the only source for research work that does not find its way into various publication channels. Doctoral dissertations are manifestation of result of four to five years of intense work involving huge investment of resources, both mental and physical and infrastructure and other support from the universities. A thesis reflects quality of research work conducted by a student and the ability of an institution to lead and support original work of research in a given discipline.

It is highly desirable to collect Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) for preservation and easy availability for all. Significant efforts at the national and international, like INFLIBNET Shodhganga, ETD@IISc, Vidhyanidhi, NDLTD, etc., have arisen to achieve this purpose. The Shodhganga@INFLIBNET Centre provides a platform for research students to deposit their Ph.D. theses and make it available to the entire scholarly community in open access. The repository has the ability to capture, index, store, disseminate and preserve ETDs submitted by the researchers.

ETDS: A NEW GENRE?

We are going through an e-yuga, where everything is available or supposed to be available in e-format. Information professionals are very much aware about e-mail, e-journal, e-book, e-commerce, e-education, e-learning etc. ETDs (electronic theses or dissertations) are a new genre of documents, continuously re-defined as technology and student knowledge evolves. "An ETD is a document that explains the research or scholarship of a researcher/student. It is expressed in a form simultaneously suitable for machine archives and worldwide retrieval. The ETD is similar to its paper predecessor. It has figures, tables, footnotes, and references. It has a title page with the authors' name, the official name of the university, the degree sought, and the names of the committee members. It documents the author's years of academic commitment. It describes why the work was done, how the research relates to previous work as recorded in the literature, the research methods used, the results, and the interpretation and discussion of the results, and a summary with conclusions. The ETD is different, however. It provides a technologically advanced medium for expressing your ideas". ETDs evolved with Digital Libraries and many academic institutions in the world treat it as an important component of their Digital Libraries.

NEED FOR ETDS ?

Indian universities play a major role in generation and dissemination of knowledge by conducting research works and producing Ph.D theses as a unique genre of information sources. The purpose of the thesis is to provide an experience in scholarship, which will be of enduring value to the student in understanding how new knowledge is acquired and communicated within the chosen field. These works contain valuable content, including focused literature reviews and details on research, which are not generally made available elsewhere.

More than that, ETDs enhance the availability of research and creative work done by researchers and increase the visibility of research and creative activities undertaken at our universities. Electronic archiving would likely make access to dissertations and theses easier, more rapid, and more economical, that digital dissertations require less space to store than paper documents, and that digital dissertations have portability advantages and may be more environmentally friendly than paper documents.

Building digital libraries of ETDs brings a many challenges including those of copyright, digitization problems, long term preservation of e-theses etc. There are many challenges which relate to the ability of organizations to incorporate the management of ETDs into their organizational structure.

Benefits of ETDs

a) To empower students to convey a richer message through the use of multimedia and hypermedia technologies;
b) free publicity for your research - authors of electronic theses become more widely known and their reputations are enhanced
c) To improve graduate education by allowing students to produce electronic documents, use digital libraries and understand issues in publishing;
d) easy worldwide access to your theses for colleagues and collaborators
e) To increase the availability of student research for scholars and preserve it electronically;
f) Reduced cost of submitting and handling theses and dissertations;
g) To empower universities to unlock their information resources; and
h) To advance digital library technology.

UGC INITIATIVES:

In 2005, the University Grants Commission of India (UGC) drafted a national policy framework entitled "UGC (Submission of Metadata and Full-text of Doctoral Theses in Electronic Format) Regulations, 2005". This Regulation proposed two sets of planned actions, such as:

- Creation of Indian National Theses Database (INTED)
- Submission of PhD Theses in Electronic Form

This set of regulations is still under consideration. They propose to formulate a roadmap to achieve widest dissemination of results of doctoral research conducted in Indian universities and bibliographic control of theses and dissertations of research degrees. So far, a few UGC-supported universities have established open access repositories for scholarly literature produced in the respective universities. Initially the universities were reluctant to change their status quo, as the contents of scholarly literature including the PhD theses will be a matter of critical analysis by the national and international peers, if the universities establish open access repositories. Now, universities will be motivated to produce qualitative doctoral theses and will maintain certain international standards. The UGC also supports development of infrastructure in Indian universities through various planned schemes. The proposed national education grid will also enrich modern ICT infrastructure in Indian universities. The Indian universities then will have necessary infrastructure to host a number of web-based information services. Hosting an ETD repository and providing online interface to INTED will not be a problem in most of the universities. Indian universities should now take a proactive role in the implementation of these regulations at the earliest, ensure qualitative research and make the results of doctoral research widely available. The UGC should also clear all bottlenecks to implement INTED and decentralized ETD repositories across the country.

As per the UGC Regulation on M.Phil/Ph.D, the responsibility of hosting, maintaining and making the digital repository of Indian Electronic Theses and Dissertation (Shodhganga) accessible to all institutions and universities is assigned to the INFLIBNET Centre.

Shodhganga @ INFLIBNET

As per the UGC Regulation (2009), the INFLIBNET Centre is responsible for hosting, maintaining and making the digital repository of Indian Electronic Theses and Dissertation (Shodhganga) accessible to all institutions and universities. The Shodhganga@INFLIBNET is set-up using DSpace, an open source digital repository software developed by MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in partnership between Hewlett-Packard (HP). The Shodhganga@INFLIBNET provides a platform for research students to deposit their Ph.D. theses and make it available to the entire scholarly community in open access. The repository has the ability to capture, index, store, disseminate and preserve ETDs submitted by the researchers. More than 1100 theses and dissertations are available in Shodhganga. The list of Top Fifteen contributing universities in Shodhganga is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Top Fifteen Contributing Universities in Shodhganga:

Name of University	No. of Contributions
Mahatma Gandhi University	517
Pondicherry University	468
Cochin University of Science & Technology	415
University of Hyderabad	335
University of Pune	207
Saurashtra University	131
Jiwaji University	112
Lakshmibai National University of Physical Education	102
Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University	77
Kannur University	27
Manipal University	26
University of Calicut	25
Veer Narmad South Gujarat University	22
Tata Institute of Social Sciences	20
Bharath University	20

ELECTRONIC THESES & DISSERTATIONS (ETD) @ TISS

As an almost wholly postgraduate institution, the creation of, and access to, new research is of central importance at Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The vast majority of students are engaged in the creation or development of new research – over 90 per cent of students are postgraduates and consequently have to submit a thesis. As a consequence for a number of years the Library and Information Service (LIS) has been involved in the development of electronic thesis availability both locally and nationally.

Apart from the general collections, the library also holds a good number of Theses and Dissertations submitted to TISS covering diverse subjects of social sciences. It is this rich valuable collection that's made the library unique in its own way. The main purpose of digitization here is to preserve, store and make available doctoral theses and dissertations to all the research scholars across the country.
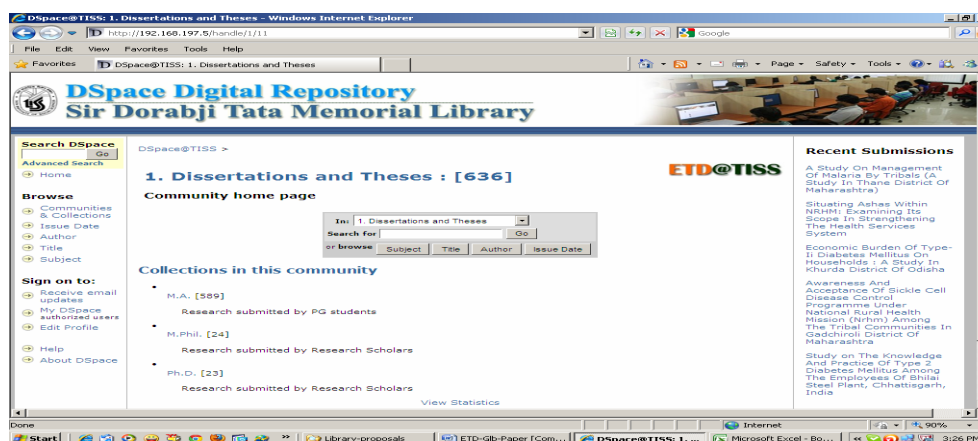
TISS Library Institutional Repository (IR) was setup in 2008 using open source software DSpace and presently there are about 1500 records are available in the repository which includes articles, book chapters, conference papers published by faculty and staff. ETD@TISS is one of the collections of Institutional Repository where more than 630 full text theses and dissertations are made available for intranet access. Since 2009, it has been made mandatory to all the students to submit their research report in softcopy to library.

The institute has signed an MoU on 9th March, 2011 with INFLIBNET Centre regarding the submission of electronic version of theses and dissertations of TISS to the digital repository "Shodhganga" set-up at the INFLIBNET Centre, Ahmedabad. This is mandatory for all the universities in the country to follow as per the UGC Notification dated 19th August, 2010.

ETD Submission

The researcher will submit his/her PhD thesis in an appropriate electronic format, alongside hard copies of his/her thesis. The submitted electronic copy of the doctoral thesis will be stored in the institutional repository. The administrator of the IR will also check the quality of metadata information. TISS Library will set up committees to formulate copyright and IPR policies, access policy, plagiarism monitoring policy other norms related to Institutional repository. The access to ETD`s can be allowed worldwide to TISS users through Ezproxy Remote Access facility.

Fig. 1: Home Page of ETD@TISS

Community-wise Distributions of ETD@TISS

As on today ETD@TISS has collection of 589 MA dissertations, 24 MPhil and 23 Ph.D theses. Figure 2 shows the community-wise number of theses and dissertations available in the ETD@TISS .
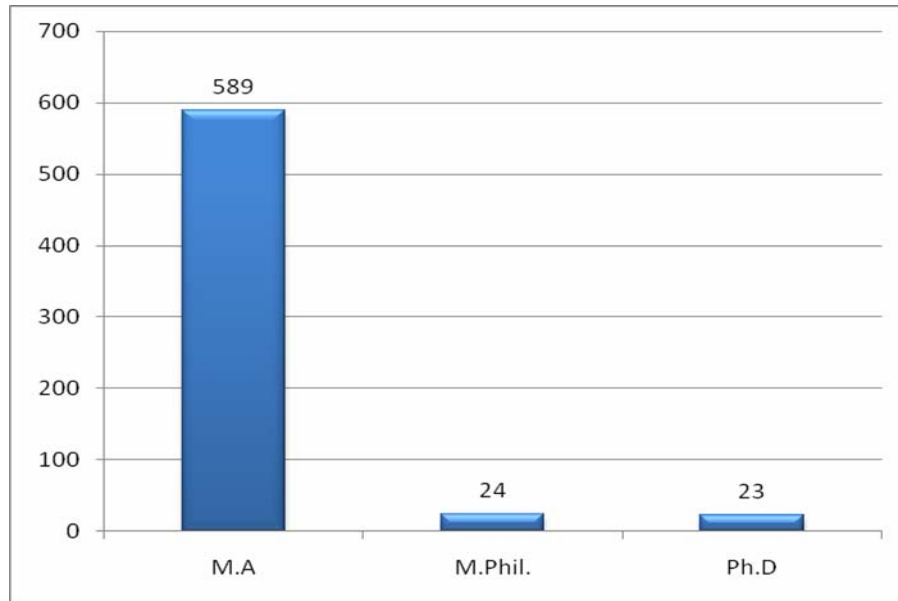
Fig. 2 Community-wise Distributions of ETD@TISS

School-wise Distribution of ETD @ TISS

The School of Social Work has maximum number of theses and dissertations with 188 followed by School of Management and Labour Studies with 144, School of Social Sciences with 138, School of Health Systems Studies with 95, Jamsetji Tata Centre for Disaster Management with 34, School of Media and Cultural Studies with 28, School of Habitat Studies with 6 and School of Rural Development 3. Figure 3 shows school-wise distribution of theses and dissertations.
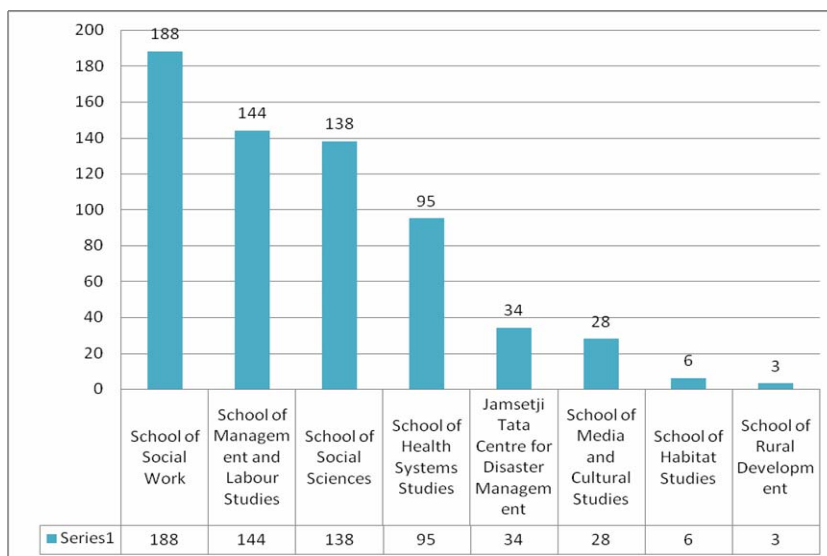

Fig. 3: School-wise Distribution of ETD @ TISS

How to Set Accessing Rules of End Users:

TISS Library includes three category of theses and dissertations i.e P.hd, M.Phil and M.A. Since the library provides a full text access facility to their users for the theses and dissertations, research scholars at TISS expressed their concern over the copy-paste technology. Taking note of this serious issue, library procured Adobe Acrobat suite through which one can disable the copy, paste and print features of PDF documents. All the theses and dissertations of TISS have been secured through Acrobat Suite. Figure 4 shows an example of secured PDF thesis.
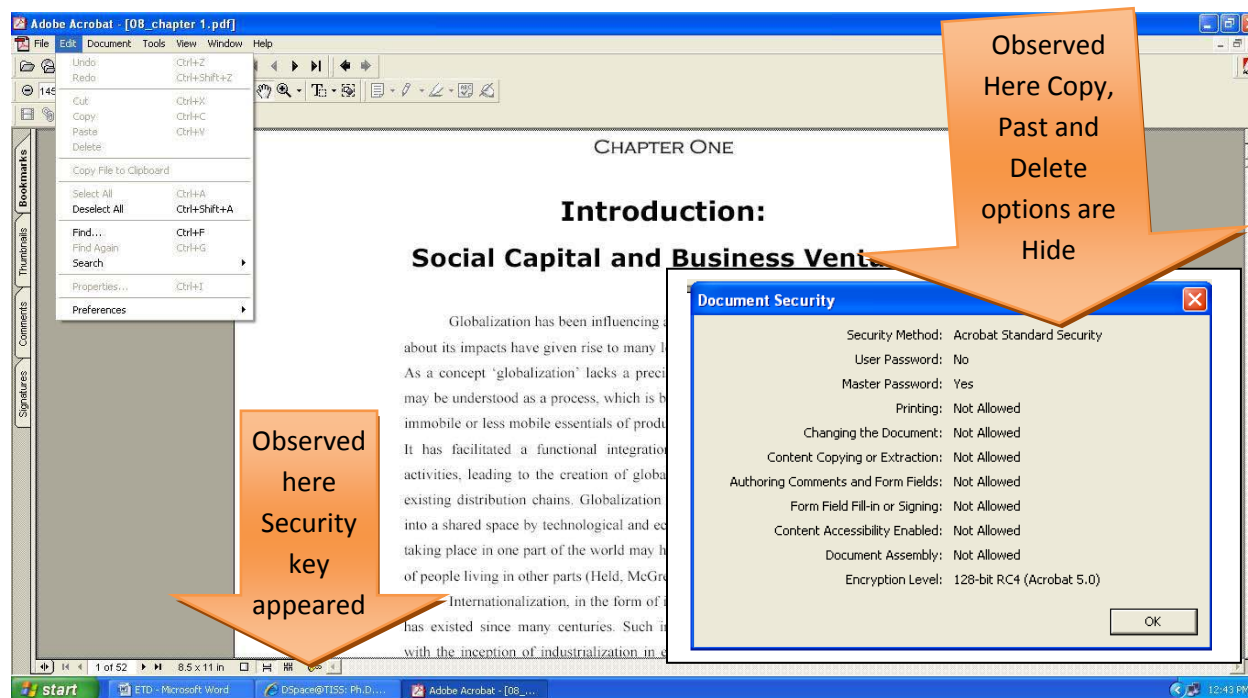

Fig.4: Acrobat secured pdf thesis

CONCLUSION:

The greatest advantages of ETDs are avoiding duplication in research work, ensuring quick retrieval of information, promoting resource sharing, and providing a permanent solution to the problem of space.

Theses and dissertations in print often contained cutting edge, comprehensive research on very specialized subjects but have been traditionally difficult to locate and to access. There is no question as to the benefit of making graduate level research, in the form electronic theses and dissertations accessible to researchers and scholars across the world. It is also clear that the current research builds on that which was done earlier. In order to advance knowledge in science, medicine, art and humanities researchers must be able to determine what has been done in the past. ETDs makes this much easier.

It is time for librarians to apprise academicians, professors, administrators, and policy makers of the importance of ETDs to teaching and research. Librarians should take the opportunity to attend workshops and conferences to gain knowledge of ETD repositories. It is essential for librarians as information professionals to take the initiative to make progress in this crucial area.

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