The use and usefulness of UPeTD: the University of Pretoria’s ETD repository

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Background

University of Pretoria (UP)

- One of the leading & largest universities in South Africa
- 9 faculties & Business School
- Culturally diverse students
- Lectures presented in Afrikaans, English and Sepedi
- Offers 230 qualifications
- In 2011 - 1343 postgraduate programmes
- Student population 62 500
  - 45 000 contact students
  - 18 000 distance education students (67% are from Southern African Development Community Countries)
UPeTD

- UP supports Open Access
- Take active responsibility for dissemination of research outputs
- UPeTD – operation for 12 years
- Ranking web of World Repositories – ranked no. 67
- Mandatory policy
  - Required to submit both a paper and electronic copy of TD
  - Encouraged to self-submit
- Open Scholarship Office manages the policy with 2 staff members
Ranking Web of Repositories

UPeTD is ranked number 67 of the institutional repositories in terms of content, size and visibility and is the most used repository in the African continent.
Methodology

- Decided to utilize a questionnaire to
  - evaluate the adoption of the electronic submission of theses and dissertations to the UPeTD database
  - investigate and analyse the current processes and
  - gain insight into supervisors attitudes towards the UPeTD repository

- Objectives
  - determine the usefulness of UPeTD as a repository
  - establish the benefits for UPeTD users
  - measure policy knowledge and compliance
  - determine the most popular communication channel
  - establish the current knowledge and awareness level
Only supervisors were targeted
Personal e-mails were sent
Library website
Facebook page
Information specialists
Campus News
3 weeks completion time
165 Supervisors completed the questionnaire
Supervisors and ETDs

- Libraries are more enthusiastic than supervisors (Greig)
- Some supervisors can be very negative towards ETDs
- Supervisor’s role is critical
- Quality of student-supervisor relationship is important in positive outcome (Styles & Radloff)
- Focus: attitudes of UP postgraduate supervisors towards UPeTD
Biographical results: Age distribution
Faculty representivity

Natural & Agricultural Science has 1818 items, followed by Humanities (1384) and Engineering (1290)
Experience levels varied, but 3 supervisors had more than 20 students.
Do you as supervisor make use of UPeTD?
Do you encourage your students to use UPeTD?

- Yes: 126 (77%)
- No: 39
What do you expect students to gain from ETDs?

- Examples of research: 101
- References: 91
- Ideas on structuring: 87
- Other: 31
Which gateway to ETDs do you refer your students to?
What is your personal opinion of UPeTD?

Although supervisors find UPeTD useful, many do not know how to access it.

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<td>I cannot find what I am looking for</td>
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<td>55</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I do not know how to obtain access to UPeTD</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Do you support the availability of TDs in open access mode?

90% Yes
6 No
11 Uncertain
What are the benefits of UPeTD for your students?
Awareness

- 97% knew that it was compulsory to submit ETDs
- 85% was familiar with the policy
- Only 39% knew where to access the policy
- Many have never studied the policy & don’t know where to access it

Open ended question: what would you change about the policy
  - 53 answered
  - 28 would change nothing
What would you change about the policy?

- More time for publication should be allowed
  - UPeTD allows a 2 year embargo period
- Work gets plagiarised more
  - “Another advantage of electronic theses - Turnitin has access as well and assist in countering plagiarism.”
Do you inform, encourage and assist students to self-submit ETDs?

- Self-submission rate is very low – 19%
- Supervisors inform & encourage
- Do not assist in self-submissions
- 57% was unaware of the web support and submission guidelines
What is your preferred communication channel?

- Twitter: 3% (4 responses)
- Facebook: 5% (8 responses)
- Library web: 29% (45 responses)
- Campus News: 38% (59 responses)
- Faculty coordinator: 50% (78 responses)
- Librarian: 52% (81 responses)
Retrospective digitization of ETDs

- Support from 86%
- Only 15% knew that they could request to have items digitized
Access options to ETDs

- 42% discussed the access options carefully
- Only 34% knew that they needed a letter from the Vice-Principal to place an item on total embargo
- Management of access options causes huge problems
  - “I did not realise that we could restrict dissertations”
- 90% indicated that they were satisfied with the current management of the access options
Final lessons learnt

- How can your UPeTD experience be improved?
  - 39 responses received
  - Questionnaire in itself raised awareness
  - More queries have been received since the questionnaire circulated
  - Some commented on the excellent service
  - BUT many requested more assistance, marketing and training
  - Many misconceptions e.g. publishing & copyright

- Possible solutions
  - Annual awareness drives
  - Communicate news more regularly
  - Provide more training, assistance and updated UPeTD manual
Conclusion

- Questionnaire was a valuable data collection instrument
- Provided insight into current adoption practices and attitudes

Positive side
- Many were fairly knowledgeable
- UPeTD was rated as a valuable source of information
- Offered many benefits for students

Negative side
- Supervisors had a lack of knowledge regarding policy, access options
- Misconceptions thrive on campus

Advocacy and training is an ongoing process
Final word from a supervisor...

“I have not used it in the past but due to this survey I will certainly do so and recommend to my students to use. In the past I just considered the electronic depositing of theses as an extra nuisance!”
References


References


Thank you!
Questions?

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