Being Creative While Finding a Middle Ground

HANDLING THE DILEMMAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CREATIVE WRITING THESIS WORKS
Christy Shorey, Manager of University of Florida's Institutional Repository and the Theses and Dissertations Program, George A. Smathers Libraries

Stacy Wallace, Assistant Director, University of Florida Graduate School Editorial and Publications Office
Near the turn of the century, UF began to embrace the concept of electronically submitted and retained theses and dissertations.

Making these documents more easily accessible to scholars seemed to be a no-brainer; peer review is certainly a shared best practice across academic campuses everywhere.
ETDs and UF

• Pilot project began in the fall of 1998.

• Mandated for all submissions after the fall of 2001

• Last paper submission received was in 2007.
Soon after, our troubles began with the Creative Writing program within UF’s English Department.

When drafting their release and dissemination policies governing theses and dissertations, UF had not considered the needs of this particular cohort of students, with their distinct desires, regarding the ability to publish these creative works independently and for profit in the future.

The needs of the creative writing authors vary from those in traditional academic publishing.
Restrictions on Traditional ETDs at UF

Campus-Only Restriction

- During the variable restriction period, a campus-only restriction limits access of the ETD to only those who are on a UF campus or are coming through a UF IP address.

- UF Researchers have full access to the complete ETD.

- Once the campus-restriction period has expired, the works are released to the public.

Two-Year Secret Restriction

- This restriction limits access to the ETD to the following information: Student name, year published, Committee Chair name, Department, & subject.

- If this option is chosen, the work would have this limited record for only 2 years and would then be released to the public.
Theses and Dissertations at UF are intended to be eventually available via open-access and to be accessible by outside scholars for appropriate peer review, making appropriate contributions to their fields of study.

UF does not allow a permanent restriction on these works.
The Issues for the Creative Writing Authors

How the needs of the creative writing student vary from the needs of the traditional thesis student
Financial Impact

Our creative writing authors argue that they are directly financially impacted by the release of their works to the public, citing that any future publication contracts with publishers will not allow for the contents of the thesis work to ever be accessible, with access to the thesis from any address or search engine, from within UF or externally.

Careers in Academia

Although a solution may seem obvious, faculty in the English Department have eloquently and simultaneously expressed distress over this work not being considered a traditional thesis, mainly for reasons of potential advancement into the Ph.D. program or a future career in academia for their creative writing master’s students.

Not Your Mother’s Thesis

The rub has always originated from treating these creative works as traditional thesis works, rather than projects in lieu of thesis types of work, which are not bound by the same set of restriction and publishing guidelines.
Over the past few years, the creative writing faculty has expressed the need (as have the students) to permanently block all of these works from public access.

This causes much distress, as the University of Florida does not offer permanent embargoes to any other unit, with the longest embargo being two years (although this can be extended every two years on a continual basis) and also makes all of the theses and dissertations open access after all restriction periods have expired.

All other graduate theses at the University of Florida are governed by the same set of rules.

In turn, all internal and external systems are built with the standard restriction parameters in mind. Providing personalized restrictions to only one particular program has caused a great deal of workarounds for many offices.

Not Your Mother’s Thesis
Here at UF, the restriction periods for the creative writing students have continuously changed throughout the years.

In the beginning, both a 5- and 10-year option were available. Then, a case was made to extend this period to a 15-year restriction period. Next, the English Department settled in the camp that the only viable option to their creative writing students was a permanent lifetime restriction.

So here we are with a thesis document with a permanent external block from peer review.
Restrictions on ETDs Offered to Our Creative Writing Students at UF

Campus-Only Restriction
- During the variable restriction periods (1-, 2-, and 15-year), a campus-only restriction limits access of the ETD to only those who are on a UF campus or are coming through a UF IP address.
- UF Researchers have full access to the complete ETD.
- This restriction can be extended to make this a permanent restriction so that the work will only ever be accessible to UF researchers.

Two-Year Secret Restriction
- This restriction limits access to the ETD to the following information: Student name, year published, Committee Chair name, Department, & subject.
- If this option is chosen, the work would have this limited record for only 2 years, then would return to being under the campus-only permanent restriction, when the restriction period expires.
This Did Not Solve All of Our Issues

WE WERE LEFT WITH A NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITHIN THIS PROGRAM WHO FOUND THAT THEIR RESTRICTIONS WERE EXPIRING.

THESE STUDENTS HAD GRADUATED DURING A PERIOD WHEN A PERMANENT RESTRICTION HAD NOT BEEN AVAILABLE TO THEM. IN TURN, THEIR RESTRICTIONS EXPIRED AND THE WORKS WERE NOW APPROPRIATELY BEING RELEASED.

THIS ALSO PRESENTED THE QUESTION, HOW SHOULD OTHER INTERSECTIONAL WORKS, SUCH AS PROJECTS-IN-LIEU-OF-THESIS BE TREATED WITHIN OUR IR?
Exploring Open Access
Beliefs vs. Student as Copyright Holder
HOW WE GOT TO WHERE WE ARE WITH POLICIES AND PRACTICE
Transition from Print to Electronic

- All theses and dissertations submitted to the library are part of the permanent record.
- We were only accepting ETDs as of 2007.
- Print TDs available both on campus, and via Inter Library Loan (ILL). Other institutions may also have copies.

Because of the permanent record aspect, and trying to match access available for print TDs, placing ETDs in the institutional repository (IR@UF) as open access works made sense.

(even retrospectively digitize print dissertations are added as OA items in the IR@UF)
Open Access – the Library Perspective

- Best matches what we were doing with print
- Increases findability and potential impact of UF Scholarship
- Increases opportunities for peer review
- Good marketing tool for university
- We believe it can help our students:
  - Learn about Open Access and Copyright in general
  - Get permanent link that can be included on CV or resume
Student as Copyright Holder
The Process

- At UF, students retain copyright of theses, dissertations, and projects-in-lieu-of-theses (PILOT)

- As part of the graduation process, students sign a form that gives permission for UF to host the work online, and make it publically available
  - T & D students sign Publishing Agreement at time of defense
  - PILOT students sign a Grant of Permissions that is submitted with project
Student as Copyright Holder
Cons of Open Access

- Possible impact on publishing
  - First publication rights, First Electronic rights, First English-Language rights, exclusive publication rights are all off the table for publishers

- Potential research in progress may be scooped

- Student may not view their TD or PILOT as the best work
  - May seek to improve it with publication
  - May continue research, and not want earlier efforts made public
Restrictions are (were) the Middle Ground

- Students have 3 options for access level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immediate Release</th>
<th>Campus Only Access</th>
<th>Secret Restriction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Available after degree certification</td>
<td>6 month, 1 year, 2 year (previously also 5 and 10 years available)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Students can request extensions on their restriction, but only in increments currently available

- As of Feb 2016 there were 85 Creative Writing theses where embargo had expired, or were set to expire by 2017

- Permenant Campus Restriction became an option for creative writing students in 2009 – but it was not retroactively applied
Where We Ended Up
Where We Go Next

CHANGES TO CREATIVE WRITING RESTRICTIONS, AND THE DIFFICULTY OF IMPLEMENTATION
As older restrictions expired, we started getting emails from concerned creative writing students.

- Six emails from students/faculty on behalf of students, from late 2014 to early 2016

Graduate School and English department met March 2016 to discuss options for applying permanent restriction to all creative writing theses.

Of course no implementation is without problems:

- Did we need to get consent from students?
- Platform where IR@UF sits doesn’t always reliably enforce new restriction dates*

“My book [will be published] March 2017 and lately people have been finding my thesis online. It includes a very, very rough draft of some of the things that made it into the book ... and my publisher is worried this could potentially cause trouble.”
Where We Go Next

IT Considerations

- Reprocess creative writing theses to ensure embargo date is correct/ will be honored in IR@UF platform
- Enhance graduate school system to allow program specific use of “permanent” restriction option prior to graduation (cannot currently track anything more than 2 year restriction)

Philosophical Considerations

- Are there other programs that should be considered for different restriction options?
- Do we have the right to require students to make their work OA at all, if they retain the copyright?
Questions?

Christy Shorey
Manager of University of Florida's Institutional Repository and the Theses and Dissertations Program, George A. Smathers Libraries

chrshor@uflib.ufl.edu
IRMManager@uflib.ufl.edu
http://ufdc.ufl.edu/ufetd

Stacy Wallace
Assistant Director, University of Florida Graduate School Editorial and Publications Office

beloved@ufl.edu
gradedit@aa.ufl.edu