

Introducing Electronic Theses and Dissertations in Universities: An Indian Perspective

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Abstract

The changing electronic environment is forcing Indian Universities, to think about digitizing their theses and dissertations and introduce ETD Systems. A national level study was undertaken to analyze the present scenario in Indian Universities with focus on Ph D Research Scholars, Research Guides and University Librarians. The exact picture of doctoral theses collection, its usage, difficulties in access, academic and research community's attitude towards digital archiving and electronic publishing are discussed. Few Universities have already started ETD Projects, and majority of them will be starting the projects soon. The need for an experienced national level agency for coordinating the work, national level policies from agencies like UGC, necessary financial and technical guidance etc are identified through the analysis. Most of the academics are supporting the idea of ETDs, but still a moderate majority is supporting its Global access through Internet.

Introduction

Indian Higher Education system built upon the British system, is one of the largest and oldest systems of higher education found anywhere in the world. As of now there are 320 Universities, including affiliating Universities, deemed universities, open universities, universities under I. C. A. R, I. C. M. R etc and institutions of national importance like I. I. Ts and I. I. Ms which offer Doctoral Programs [1]. The creation and use of digital information is increasing phenomenally all over the world, and the electronic academic and scholarly communication process, becomes a reality in Indian Universities through University Grants Commission's UGC Infonet Program [2]. Therefore the stake holders are becoming more aware and started looking for more resources and latest information. Librarians in India are also slowly setting their minds to take up the challenges and actively getting involved in e-content creation of grey resources and hosting them on institutional repositories for open access. This changing environment forced Indian Universities, to think about digitizing their theses and dissertations, since these resources belong to the Universities and are not widely accessible out side the campus or Libraries.

1. Need of the Study

A world wide Literature search showed the increase in Ph Ds worldwide and its importance in furthering academic research. The present scenario in the dissemination of Doctoral research results, the problems faced during accessing them, the archival and publication practices of Ph D Theses are solved by the introduction of ETDs as a solution, world wide. It is with this context, there was a need to study the present scenario in Indian Universities with the recent trend in electronic publication and open access. Suggestion of an appropriate model was the part of the project, and this study will be helpful for the model.

2. Methods of the Study

A survey was conducted at national level with focus on Ph D Research Scholars, Research Guides and University Librarians, through specially designed Questionnaires. Research Scholars and Guides were selected from the participants of INFLIBNET's E-Resources awareness programs conducted at INFLIBNET and at various Universities across the country [3]. They were familiar with latest IT developments taking place in Information transfer and working with Universities, where electronic information culture has already emerged. 65 University Librarians, 88 Ph D Supervisors and 173 Ph D Scholars participated in this survey (See table, below).