

## Open access to full text and ETDs in Europe: improving accessibility through the choice of language?

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### Abstract

Next to journal articles and eprints electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) are the most frequent document type found in open archives, for various reasons:

- ETDs are a well defined and well referenced document type. Rules for deposit and citation are generally established on a national level, and international standards exist for specific information and these metadata, contrary to other grey documents.
- ETDs are administrative documents, and students can be "obliged" to deposit their work in an archive or repository for formal reasons.

The paper describes some tendencies concerning electronic theses and dissertations in Europe as observed during explorations of institutional and other repositories, with specific regard to the full text.

In the first part we examine the changing landscape in repositories where access to the complete full text of a thesis no longer is the unique offer, but where we also find partial access, temporary embargoes and bibliographic citations only. The increase of the number of items thus appears somewhat counter-balanced by a decrease in "quality".

In the second part, we take a closer look at the language issue of ETDs.

If the technical open access to the full text of ETDs is increasing, it doesn't necessarily imply an easier access (i.e. readability) for everyone, since the language barrier may still exist. Can the "accessibility" be increased by choosing the right language?

Today we observe a growing number of ETDs written in English, the vernacular language for scientific research. But who writes in English? In this paper we explore the phenomenon under different aspects.

- Are there differences between countries?
- Are there differences between disciplines?
- Are foreign students more inclined to write in English?
- Does the participation in international projects influence the choice of language?

The growing complexity of the ETD landscape calls for explicit policies to inform the user of a given repository as well as for tools such as directories providing detailed information on a general level.

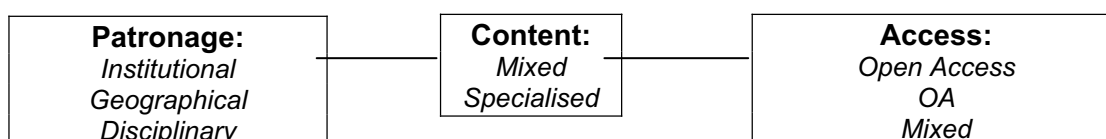
### FROM OPEN ARTICLE ARCHIVES TO COMPLEX REPOSITORIES

In the early days of the open archive movement the following equation was true for many sites: Archive = Journal Article = Open Access to its full text = Self-deposit by the author

The archive/repository might be disciplinary, like arXiv, or institutional. The article might be available in its preprint or its postprint version, but free access to the entire full text was guaranteed. Since the author submitted his article, legal obstacles only concerned the issues with the commercial editor.

The landscape has changed very much since these early days. Soon other document types were added, in particular doctoral theses and conference papers. Institutions set up policies to give open access to the entire scientific production. Today the Directory of Open Access Repositories (OpenDOAR) uses the following categories for repositories: aggregating, disciplinary, governmental, institutional (OpenDOAR 2007: <http://www.opendoar.org/find.php>). Each category can be combined with document types and/or disciplinary criteria.

Technical tools like e-prints and DSpace software platforms are increasingly used to store (and archive) the scientific output of a given community, whether it is in public access or not. The presentation of Andrew (Andrew 2006) shows examples of the growing complexity of repositories and portals to electronic resources. He classifies repositories as follows:



**Figure 1: Basic repository classification by Andrews**

Moreover, scientific publications, including grey literature, are no longer the only items to populate repositories. An increasing number of websites add research material in text form or multimedia