Beyond the Boundaries of Rims and Oceans: Globalizing Knowledge with ETDs

Surging ahead with theses collections: a collaborative case study

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With the introduction of the new Research Information System (RIS) infrastructure at Charles Darwin University (CDU), based on Elsevier PURE, the Library has taken the initiative to collaborate with the University's Office of Research and Innovation (henceforth the Research Office) in making the University's research collections more easily discoverable and hence more widely accessible through a series of different avenues. In late 2017, when the new system was rolled out, the Library decided to consolidate the IR (Institutional Repository) functionality with the research administration functionality of the management system, to better and more efficiently manage the research data and open access publications needs of the University. Previously, the Library was singularly responsible for providing public access to CDU research through its eSpace institutional repository (IR) while the Research Office focussed on its primary role of managing research administration. In collaboration with the Research Office, the Library has started work on migrating Higher Degree Research (HDR) theses from the repository into the RIS and streamlining the process around their management internally.

A significant research collection at CDU is the growing collection of theses which thus far, had been housed in separate collections based on their format types. From 1989, CDU library was responsible for housing the University's theses in print format and managed their discoverability via the Library catalogue. Subsequently a change in policy required that students needed to submit their thesis both in hard copy as well in electronic format on a CD. While print theses were still discoverable via the catalogue, access to them was restricted to the physical confines of the Library. In response to the policy change, the Library made the theses available full text via its eSpace institutional repository. Over time this practice has resulted in a fragmented collection of theses with different workflows involving a number of different staff. The Resources and Cataloguing teams were responsible for managing print theses while the Digitisation team would the add metadata for the electronic version of the same thesis in eSpace.

With the roll out of the new Research Information System, the Library took the opportunity to streamline work practices and improve the discovery and access of the theses. In partnership with relevant stakeholders, the Library championed the review of the University's overall research policy and oversaw the amendments towards theses management. Print copies of the theses are now no longer required, unless there are exceptional circumstances. In future all new theses completions will be deposited directly into the RIS. A backlog of print theses for scanning remains, with priority for digitisation assigned according to priority of research topic.

Making the theses available in electronic format is subject to permissions being provided by the author. Where this permission is not available, for example, where the author considers the content as being sensitive due to Indigenous cultural knowledge protocols, restricted access is made available in consultation with the author. For other cases, a risk-managed approach is

taken to making theses widely accessible with a take-down notice provision if the researcher expresses concerns as to the availability of their thesis.

In addition, the Library is also liaising with the University's Colleges and Schools to showcase a number of other types of theses - honours, postgraduate course work and final year theses.

Theses are progressively being migrated from the existing IR to the new RIS in order to make them available through CDU's new Research Portal https://researchers.cdu.edu.au.The collaboration between the Library and the Research Office in making all the University's research outputs including theses, available through this new Portal, ensures that both areas are jointly responsible for the communication, engagement and training efforts relating to the theses collection.

The primary aim of the new research system is for CDU to deliver on two key business mandates: efficient research management; and improved research discovery and accessibility. The unique and innovative approach of incorporating the Library workflow and expertise, to that of the existing Research Office process, has resulted in an improved throughput via a single shared workflow. A major achievement of this initiative is the reduction in the duplication of effort and development of a shared understanding of the overarching research management life cycle.

 It goes without saying that a number of difficulties were encountered during the journey, both in the initial setting up of processes, as well as the varied and unexpected issues that arose during the project, and how they were resolved. The presentation will outline the pragmatic approach CDU Library is taking towards developing innovative solutions to a wide range of issues.

A major achievement of this initiative is the reduction in the duplication of effort and development of a shared understanding of the overarching research management life cycle. CDU's research and in particular its theses collection, is now being showcased on the public-facing CDU Research Web portal - an online institutional repository hosted at CDU - in which research outputs are stored, preserved and being made accessible.