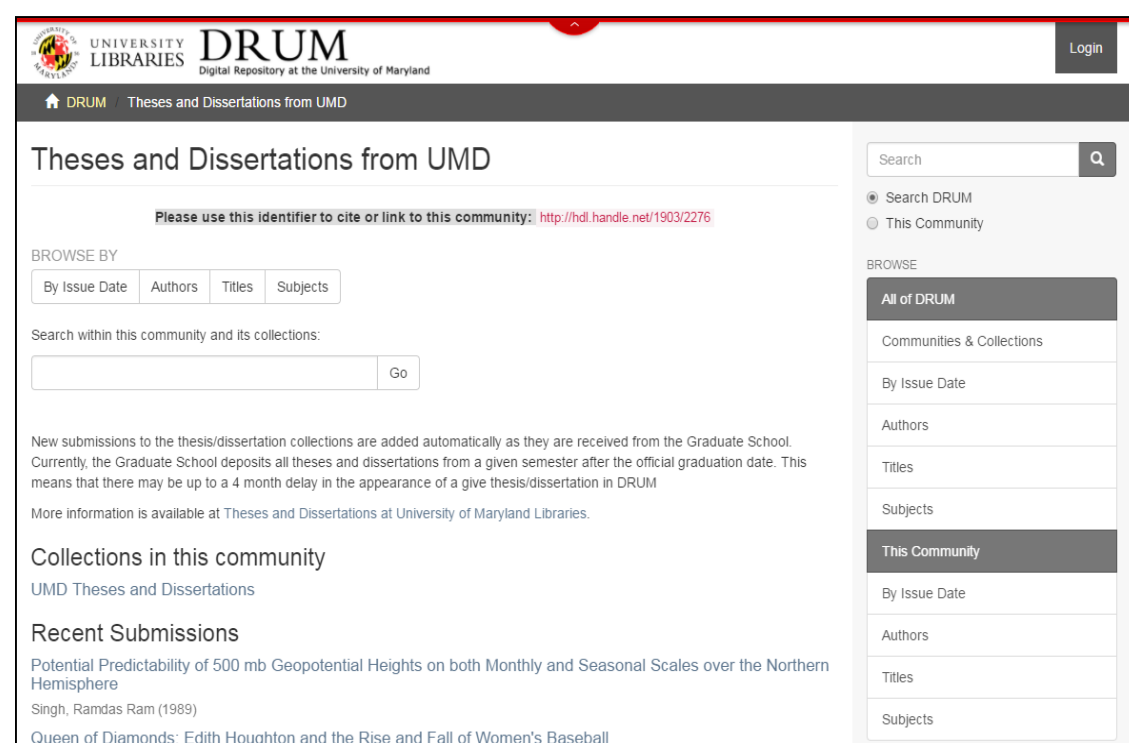# Embargoes for UMD Theses and Dissertations: Workflows & Trends
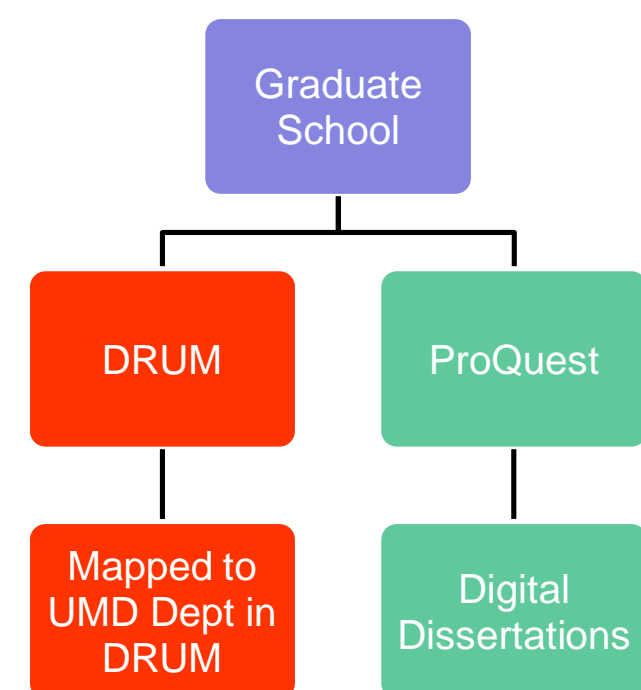
Terry M. Owen
University of Maryland Libraries, College Park, Maryland, 20742 USA

Introduction

The UMD Graduate School has required electronic submission of theses and dissertations since 2003 and all graduate research is automatically deposited in the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM) and made freely available over the web, promoting open access to the diverse body of research created by UMD graduate students.

In addition, UMD theses and dissertations are also made available in the *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global* subscription database.

Benefits of DRUM

• Research widely available.

• Greatly increases the chances of the research being cited.

• Access is maintained with a permanent URL.

• No need to maintain files or changing URLs on personal web sites.

• Easy to deposit works along with associated content.

• Research is quickly and easily available from any computer at any location.

• Number of downloads shows impact of research.

Student Concerns

Mandatory electronic submission of dissertations has been well received at the University of Maryland, but there have been concerns about making students' research widely available on the web. These include:

• Publishing questions from students wanting to publish an article or book based on their electronic thesis or dissertation.

• Plagiarism / intellectual property questions from students wanting to patent their work.
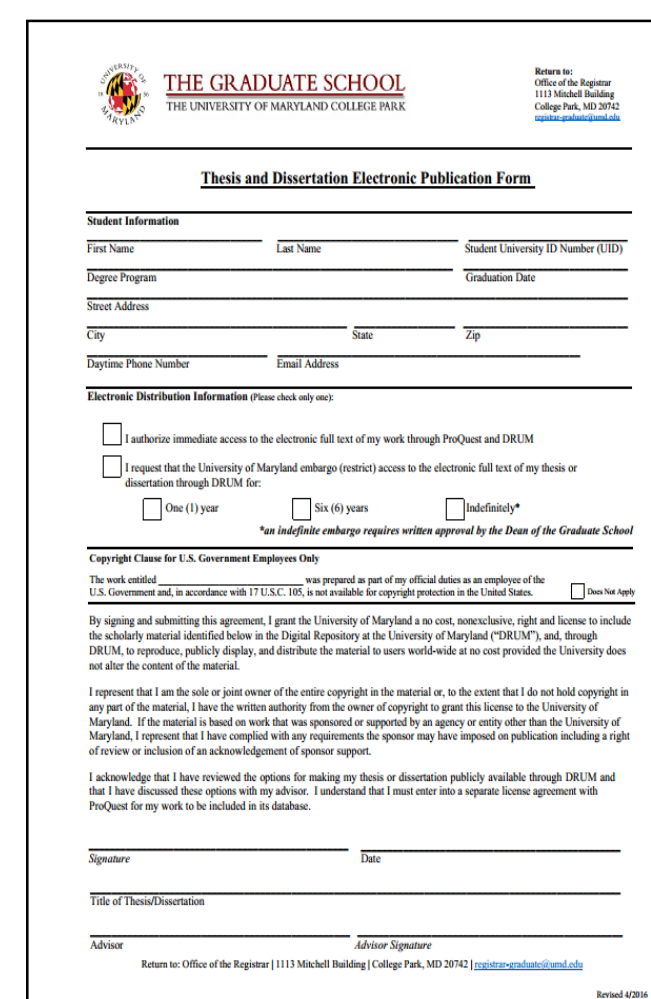
Response to Concerns

To address these concerns, graduate students now have the option of requesting an embargo period of either one year, six years, or indefinitely.

• A one-year embargo is appropriate for students seeking patent protection for their work or publishing an article in a journal.

• A six-year embargo can be requested in cases where a student plans to publish a book based on their dissertation.

• Indefinite embargoes must be approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.
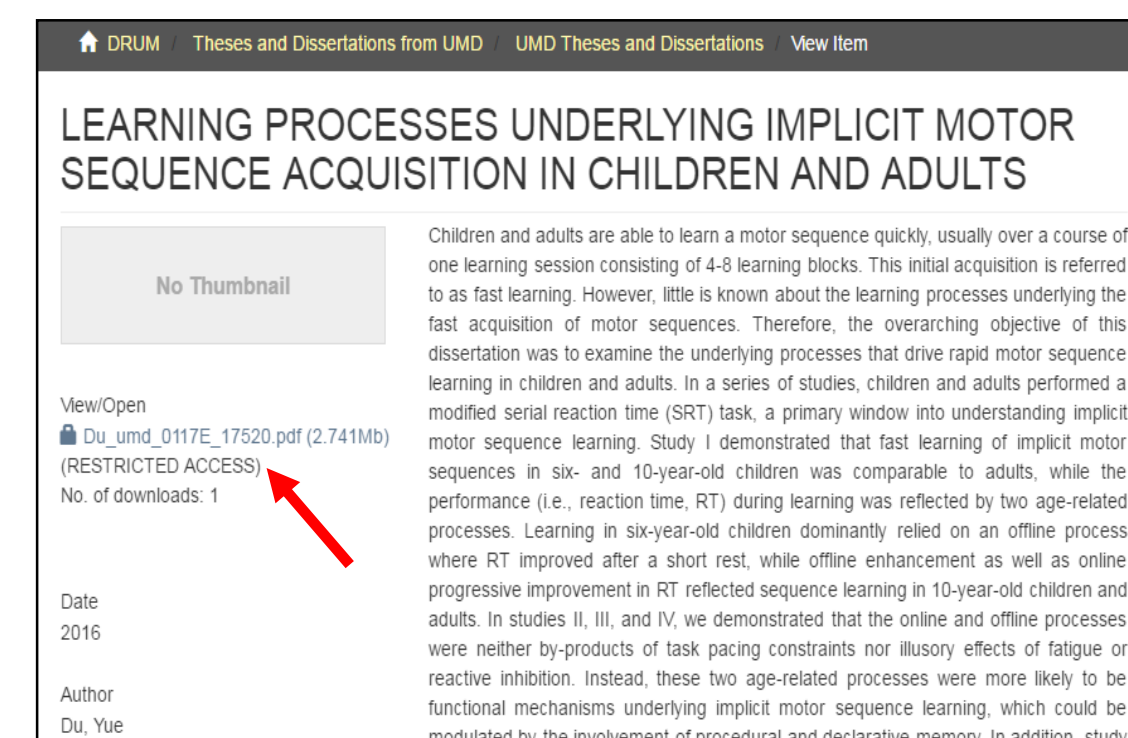

Requesting an Embargo

To request an embargo, the student must submit the "Thesis and Dissertation Electronic Publication Form" to the Graduate School prior to submitting their document electronically. Even if the student is not requesting an embargo, they must submit the form to authorize immediate access to their work via DRUM. By signing the form they also acknowledge that they have discussed the electronic delivery options with their academic advisor and the advisor must also sign the form.
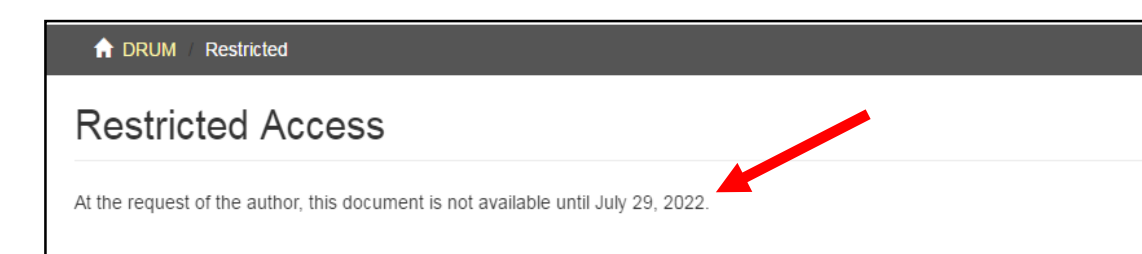

Displaying Embargoed Items

After students submit their research electronically in PDF format, the Graduate School inserts the proper embargo period into the metadata and transmits the documents to DRUM at the end of each semester. Implementing embargoes in DRUM involved modifying DSpace so that restricted documents could be easily identified. For embargoed items, RESTRICTED ACCESS appears along with the file information.
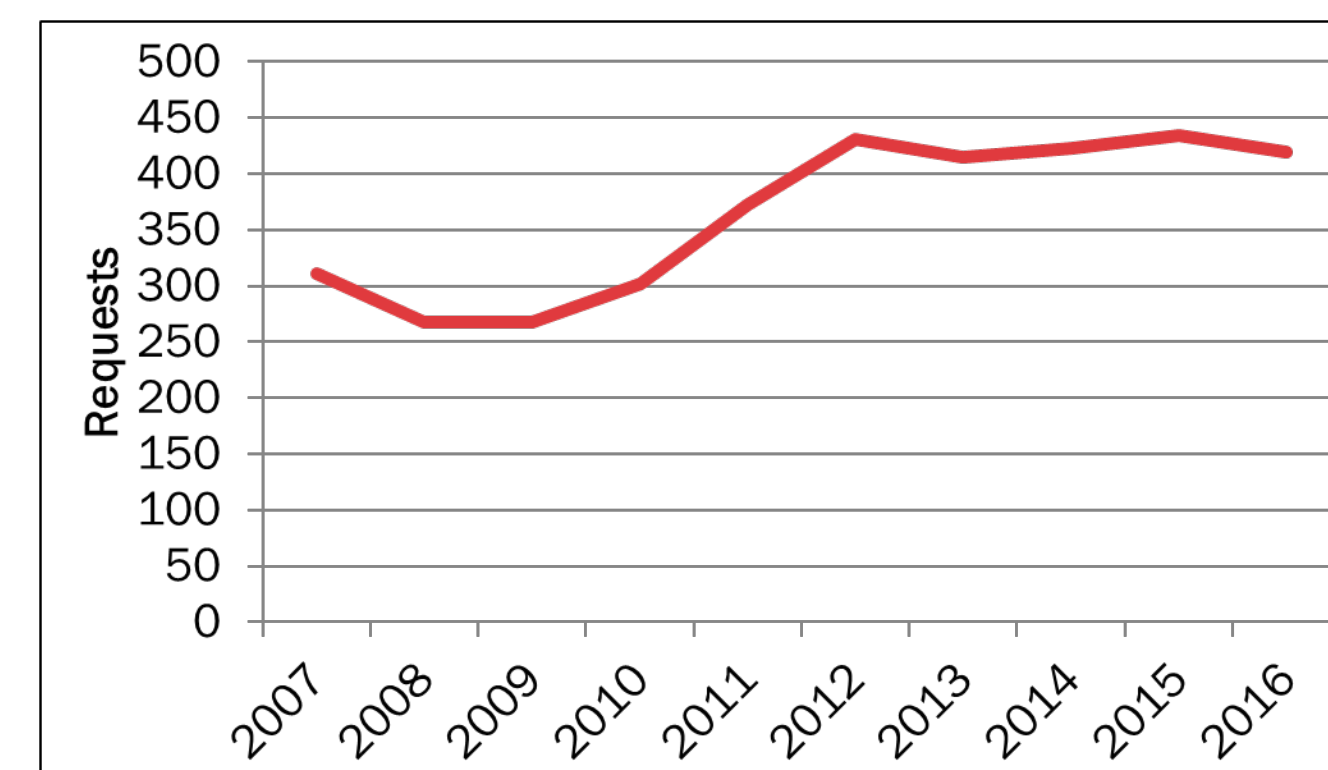

Clicking on the View/Open link displays a message explaining that the document is not available. For one-year and six-year embargoes, the date that the PDF will become available is also displayed.

Embargo Trends

UMD students have had the option of requesting an embargo since 2006. Initially the number of requests fluctuated between 250 and 300 per year but from 2009 to 2012, there was a steady increase in the number of embargo requests, leveling off in recent years.

As far as breakdown by subject area, the College of Arts & Humanities, specifically the English Department, has the greatest number of 6-year embargoes, which you would expect since this would give them enough time to publish that all-important book, but surprisingly, it's the sciences that have the greatest percentage of embargo requests overall with the Chemistry Department leading the pack with almost 70%. Overall, embargo requests have been averaging around 40% for each semester.

	Degrees Awarded	1-yr	6-yr	Total	%
Engineering	2215	654	223	877	40%
Ag & Natural Res	500	156	82	238	48%
Architecture	292	38	13	51	17%
Arts & Hum	1306	151	440	591	45%
Behavioral & Soc Sci	993	228	150	378	38%
Comp, Math, Natural Sci	2191	776	193	969	44%
Biology	434	184	66	250	58%
Cell Bio	197	97	28	125	63%
Chemistry	287	154	43	197	69%
Entomology	50	24	10	34	68%
Astronomy	53	17	1	18	34%
Atmo & Oceanic Sci	73	36	4	40	55%
Computer Sci	382	71	12	83	22%
Geology	75	37	3	40	53%
Mathematics	268	64	19	83	31%
Physics	372	92	7	99	27%
Education	917	183	97	280	31%
Info Studies	47	10	1	11	23%
Journalism	62	8	7	115	24%
Business	164	41	64	105	64%
Public Health	340	107	67	174	51%
Public Policy	62	13	8	21	34%
TOTAL	9089	2365	1345	3715	41%

Future Plans

• Minimize the number of embargo requests each semester by educating graduate students and faculty advisors on the benefits of having their research available in a digital repository.

• Investigate possibility of managing limited campus access to embargoed dissertations. IP address restrictions would allow access to the dissertation from ONLY the University of Maryland campus, regardless of who the person may be.