Implementing Embargoes for Electronic Dissertations

Terry M. Owen

University of Maryland Libraries, College Park, Maryland, 20742 USA

Introduction

The Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM) was launched in August 2004 and has grown to more than 3,800 records. Managed by the University of Maryland (UM) Libraries, DRUM captures, hosts, preserves and provides access to the research output of UM faculty. Using DSpace, materials deposited in DRUM are indexed and made freely available over the web, promoting open access to the diverse body of research created by UM faculty.

In addition to archiving UM faculty research, DRUM also provides access to all UM dissertations. Students have been required to submit their dissertations electronically to the Graduate School since September 2003. As a result, it was only natural to include these electronic documents in DRUM once the digital repository was launched.

Student / Faculty 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 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 permanently.

• 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.

• Permanent embargoes must be requested from and approved by the Dean of the Graduate School.
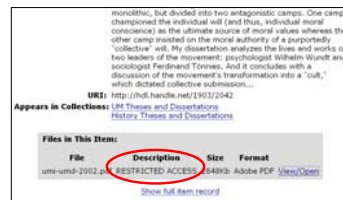
Requesting an Embargo

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.
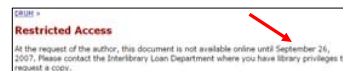
Displaying Embargoed Items

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 in the Description field with the file information.

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

Technical Implementation

Initial Problems

Restricting access to a document or bitstream was easily accomplished in DSpace by changing the authorization policies so that the item could not be viewed. It was quickly discovered that this simple solution created problems for anyone interested in viewing the document. If a user attempted to open the document, they were taken to the login screen. After completing the registration process and logging in, they discovered they still could not access the item. To eliminate this confusion, customizations were made to DSpace to make embargoed documents easy to identify.

Solutions

Modifications needed to be made to the DSpace admin interface so that embargoed items could be easily identified. In order to handle the one and six-year embargoes, a Start / End date that was already available in the DSpace database schema was added to the authorization policies interface.
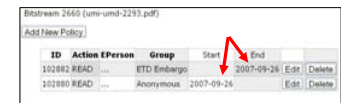
In addition, ETD Embargo was added as a new group to the policy authorizations.

The ETD Embargo group is used to signal the restricted access message and acts as a general flag for DRUM administrators.

Submission Process

The Graduate School sends the availability information for embargoed dissertations in XML, indicating whether it is a one-year, six-years, or permanent embargo. A custom loader, developed to automatically process the electronic dissertations, was modified to recognize the availability information. If an embargo has been requested for a document, the system sets the permissions by adding the ETD Embargo group to the authorizations for the item. For one and six-year embargoes, the Issue Date is used to calculate when the document will become available and this information in entered in the Start / End date fields.

The Start date corresponds to the date the embargo becomes effective (the Issue Date). The End date is when the authorization for the document converts to Anonymous READ and the bitstream is made available for viewing. If there is no Start date and the ETD Embargo group has been added to the Authorizations, then the embargo period is permanent.

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. Possibilities include:

• Campus directory authentication, which would allow members of the University of Maryland community to have access to the dissertation from anywhere.

• IP address restrictions would allow access to the dissertation from ONLY the University of Maryland campus, regardless of who the person may be.

Terry M. Owen
DRUM Coordinator
University of Maryland Libraries
College Park, MD 20742 USA
+1 301 314-1328
towen@umd.edu
http://drum.umd.edu