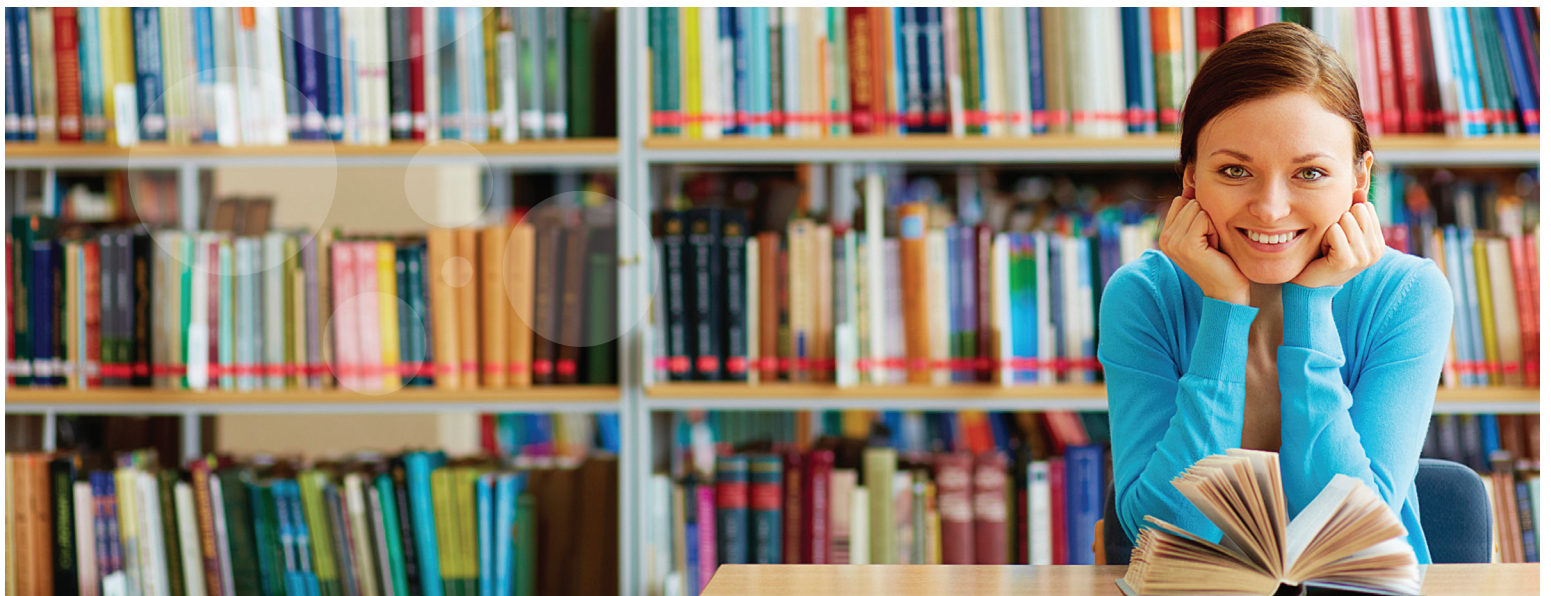


# CASE STUDY: PROQUEST DISSERTATIONS & THESES PUBLISHING

Boston College

ProQuest®



**Boston College has about 5,000 graduate students in six main schools, the largest of which is the Graduate School of Arts and Science. Its other schools include Education, Social Work, Management, Nursing, and Theology & Ministry. With both doctoral and master's graduate degrees on offer at the institution, these students produce about 200 theses and dissertations per year which, until approximately five years ago, the institution was handling as paper submissions.**

"We made the transition from paper to electronic submissions of dissertations in part due to our partnership with ProQuest," said William Donovan, Digital Imaging and Curation Manager at Boston College. "In 2008 we started thinking about transitioning to a digital-only system and were looking at how we might do this directly. At the same time, ProQuest was bringing out its online submission tool, the UMI ETD Administrator, so we decided to try the system to see how it worked for us."

Convenience in having access to a ready-made submissions system as well as the fact that it was free for students to use were major advantages for the institution. "It meant that we didn't have to build the equivalent of the ProQuest system and interface ourselves," continued Donovan. "And it's a well thought out system. The UMI EDT administrator is organized, streamlined and includes documentation which helps the institution track submissions, so we can go back and check if any queries come up, which saves both students and library staff time."

**"It's been mutually beneficial. Whenever we've reached out to ProQuest, they've been helpful and responsive to any queries raised and have been willing to work with us to adapt the system to our own needs. for our preservation goals."**

Bill Donovan, Boston College

Preservation of scholarship is also vitally important for Boston College. So, in addition to participating in ProQuest's dissertations and theses publishing program, the institution is a member of the MetaArchive Cooperative. "As well as convenience and simplicity to use ProQuest, it also complemented our partnership with the MetaArchive Co-op. The Co-op's specialty is preservation of digital collections, such as theses and dissertations, so for us choosing to partner with ProQuest was also about where the two systems met to offer the most optimal benefits for our preservation goals."

The MetaArchive Co-op is a group of 23 institutions dedicated to the preservation of digital collections. Using LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) software, each institution in the co-op has a secured, closed-access server which is linked to the co-op's network. When students upload their metadata to ProQuest, it is FTP'd to the server at Boston College. The content is then visited by six of the servers in the network and each one replicates and preserves a copy of the content in its dark archive. The servers then regularly "check in" with the content source, picking up any new additions or changes to existing content, while maintaining the original.

"Participating in national and international repositories is important for preserving these materials, I think," said Donovan. "We also participate in the international portal NDLTD, and we're a member

of Open Access Theses and Dissertations. The ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database will continue to be an important resource to search graduate scholarship and, at least for North America, it has a deep archive going back many years so it will continue to provide valuable access to information to support progression of research."

Students at Boston College, all of whom submit dissertations and theses to ProQuest, have two options to choose from: to publish via ProQuest's traditional publishing model and/or via Boston College's open access repository, eScholarship@BC. Students can also choose to protect their work from premature publication through ProQuest's embargo / delayed release mechanisms. Whatever embargo they choose applies to BC's OA repository as well.

But while these options give students choice over access to their work (and also to comply with funding mandates, if applicable), there still seems to be some confusion as to what each option entails. "We need our students to have clear ideas on what is open access and what is embargoed, that both decisions are independent of each other and the subsequent consequences for discoverability and accessibility," continued Donovan. "Students aren't always clear that if they choose to have an embargo on their dissertation, they can still participate in Open Access once the embargo runs out. We're reviewing what we have on our website to help explain this more clearly to students and we're speaking with ProQuest to see how they could help. For example, when embargoes on dissertations expire, it would be good if ProQuest could send out an automated email notification to inform the institution that the dissertation is about to be released. We'd also like to implement Creative Commons as part of the ProQuest interface and are in discussions with ProQuest about this."

Overall, Boston College has had a very positive experience of working with ProQuest. "It's been mutually beneficial. Whenever we've reached out to ProQuest, they've been helpful and responsive to any queries raised and have been willing to work with us to adapt the system to our own needs. Enquiries are well-fielded and dealt with by a person who understands the issue and can suggest solutions for resolving it, and any suggestions for improvements or efficiencies in the process are listened to and acted upon."

So would Boston College recommend participation in the dissertations publishing program? "Working with ProQuest means institutions can have a system for submitting their ETDs without making the investment themselves. I'd also like to express my appreciation that ProQuest has been a strong supporter of ETD conferences. ProQuest is almost always the major sponsor for these, and this is really important for the ETD community. So yes, I would definitely recommend partnering with them."

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