

Editorial

At the moment there is almost no university across Europe where the question of electronic dissertations is not discussed. Students are quite keen on having their dissertation published in digital form, since new multimedia techniques of presenting their research results as well as an improved availability make this publication form particularly attractive. Consequently, the university libraries, which traditionally have collected the printed versions of these research papers, are facing a new challenge. As was to be expected the discussion triggered off a heated debate on the value of the dissertation as a research product. Furthermore, a considerable number of problems is inextricably bound up with the new development:

- Firmly established standards for the production of electronic dissertations are lacking and from country to country as well as from university to university a wide range of software solutions are tested.
- Closely related to the standardization issue is the question of long-term preservation which still awaits its solution.
- There are only a few universities where the faculties, colleges or other governmental bodies conferring doctoral degrees already accept electronic dissertations, since a number of legal issues such as authenticity of the electronic document have not yet been solved.
- New workflow procedures must be established in order to to keep the handling of the material for both students and library as simple as possible.

Our special issue on this topic is an attempt at showing how these problems are being tackled in various European countries.

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