

# Free US ETDs (FUSE)

Promoting Open Access to American graduate research

## Graduate Student Manifesto

Posted on **December 1, 2012**

Last year Texas A&M University granted a waiver to its standing policy requiring that doctoral students submit their dissertations to ProQuest/UMI for inclusion in that commercial vendor's fee-based database. The student requested the waiver as a conscious objector to the policy, arguing that "Neither A&M, nor its students have any obligation to enrich ProQuest's database, thereby enabling it to have a stranglehold on the ETD and academic publication market."

The full text of this Graduate Student manifesto is published here with the author's express permission. The only changes made to the graduate student's request for waiver are the removal of the student's name, and the name of the university administrator to whom the student directed his/her request.

BTW, the graduate student's dissertation was published in the Texas A&M Digital Repository where it has seen almost 100 downloads since going online in 2012. Among those benefitting from this freely-accessible work of graduate research are users in Iran, the Netherlands, Russian Federation, China, the U.K., the Czech Republic, France and Germany.

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*Sent: Saturday, October 29, 2011 11:01 AM*

*To: Thesis Office*

*Subject: Doctoral graduation requirement of signing ProQuest form*

*Dear <name redacted>,*

*Thank you for discussing with me the requirement regarding signing the ProQuest form in order for doctoral students to graduate from Texas A&M University.*

*I have serious concerns about signing this form, not from a perspective of my personal research and its availability, but from one of open access, the role of public universities, and leadership on policy-making.*

*Let me state at the outset that I am supportive of providing students with an with \*option\* of signing the form and submitting dissertations to the ProQuest database. I have no problem with students making an informed decision and choosing to include their dissertation in this database. ProQuest has a wide visibility based on an extensive subscription base and some may prefer to have their work available through this network.*

*My concerns stems from the fact that a requirement to submit one's dissertation to this database has several implications, some of which are negative and others, outdated.*

*1. ProQuest is a private entity, whose goal is to earn profit. While I am all for private enterprise, it bothers me that Texas A&M, a large, public university, requires its students to support ProQuest's endeavor.*

*Neither A&M, nor its students have any obligation to enrich ProQuest's database, thereby enabling it to have a stranglehold on the ETD and academic publication market.*

*2. ProQuest's databases are closed and only subscribing individuals or organizations can gain access to these materials. While a large subscription base was a great way to provide visibility to one's work prior to 2000 A.D., this model actually reduces visibility of a student's work in today's Google-enabled, digital repository-powered internet age. I am strongly opposed to having my work put behind a paywall and diminishing its visibility without suitable compensation from an entity that survives and thrives on inclusion my work in their database.*

*3. Texas A&M has demonstrated leadership by providing open access to student theses and dissertations through the TAMU digital repository. I am intent upon including my dissertation in this repository in order for it to be accessible to the world for decades to come. If ProQuest would like to have my dissertation, they may still get it for free when TAMU-DR makes it available after my chosen embargo period.*

*4. Following on A&M's leadership in creating the infrastructure for open access dissertations, I would like my home institution to show leadership in policy-making as well. It seems coercive at best, to require students to support ProQuest in order to earn their degree.*

*Aligning graduation policies with its infrastructure will demonstrate leadership in the*

*still-nascent area of open access academic publishing.*

*To its credit, UT-Austin has backed its repository with strong policies that require inclusion of student dissertations and doing away with regulations for submitting dissertations anywhere else. As an equal partner in creating the Texas Digital Library, A&M should now be a partner in updating graduation requirements and policies to support the formidable open access infrastructure created by Texas' two large public universities.*

*Education at Texas A&M has influenced my worldview tremendously. I look forward to being educated on aspects of this policy that I may have overlooked. I am, after all, still a student here. 😊*

*I hereby request that:*

*a. Texas A&M's thesis office do away with the requirement for submitting dissertations to the ProQuest database in order to graduate with a doctoral degree from this institution.*

*b. If it is not possible to eliminate this requirement in a short period during which I expect to graduate, grant me a waiver as a conscientious objector to this policy.*

*With best regards,*

<name redacted>



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