CASE STUDY: PROQUEST DISSERTATIONS & THESES PUBLISHING

Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU)
Case Study: Digital Archiving and Access Program (DAAP)

Mary Ellen Sloane is User Services Librarian for Basic and Applied Sciences at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). “We really appreciate the value of digital dissertations for our users, our graduate students and faculty. We were already getting some dissertations in microform but that wasn’t the most easy of mediums to access, especially as users went increasingly online and were working remotely,” said Mary Ellen. “Additionally, the much broader and easier access to essential information that PQDT (ProQuest® Dissertations & Theses) provides along with the reduction in processing time and effort associated with physical copies of dissertations, was also much appreciated.”

The institution has access to more than 33,000 journals and periodicals and approximately 1,000,000 monographs, alongside multiple databases and other collections, and the thousands of dissertations and theses available from ProQuest are a very important complement to these resources. “Books and journals are of course essential tools for study and research. But sometimes a book can be a little bit too general, and talk quite broadly around a particular subject, and sometimes journal articles don’t quite cover the specific subject matter the student is looking at.

One other benefit that MTSU appreciates is the access ProQuest provides to their institution’s dissertations and theses.

“I really like that we can have a listing of just the dissertations and theses that are from our university,” said Mary Ellen. “This is really important because we’re not printing physical copies anymore; they are just going to be available electronically through PQDT.”

Perpetual access to digital theses and dissertations is becoming an increasing concern for institutions, as more choose to produce e-only versions of graduate works. As the Library of Congress’ official repository for dissertations and theses published within North America, ProQuest has a duty of care to deliver robust preservation strategies that ensure works will be accessible to future generations of students, researchers, and scholars. Dissertations and theses (including those that are “born digital”) are archived on two copies of microform, each stored in separate climate and humidity controlled vaults. Digital back up is also provided, with page-based dissertations and theses stored as TIFFs and PDFs in the online electronic vaults.

ProQuest is also publishing more international dissertations and theses, as the demand for access to global research grows via new ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (PQDT Global).

And this is something that Mary Ellen and MTSU’s students have previously mentioned that they’d appreciate access to. “I think access to a global repository of dissertations and theses would be great!” said Mary Ellen. “A repository for global research is definitely a good idea, though I don’t know how ProQuest would go about making that happen!”

“Dissertations and theses serve a particular research need in that, while their subject matter can be very narrow, they provide excellent detail and coverage on that topic which makes them such excellent resources for study.”