Electronic Theses and Dissertations: Two Surveys of Editors and Publishers

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Electronic Theses & Dissertations: Two Surveys of Editors & Publishers

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Abstract

In two separate surveys, editors and publishers of established academic journals were invited to respond to online questions exploring issues surrounding prior publication in an electronic environment, with particular emphasis on electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs). With response rates of 27% and 58% respectively, certain conclusions and patterns could be discerned. The most noticeable pattern was a lack of consensus on the question of electronic dissemination and how it may or may not contribute to the designation of research as "published". The differences in opinion are varied and will be presented in both statistical and narrative format, with results from both surveys being presented.

Electronic Theses & Dissertations: Two Surveys of Editors & Publishers

At the *2nd Symposium on Electronic Theses and Dissertations* in May of 1999 in Virginia, it became evident that several issues or 'controversies' had been identified in the discussions surrounding electronic publishing in general, and electronic dissertations specifically. Some of the issues included:

- The question of long-term preservation and transfer of content to future formats
- Concerns about how electronic access might facilitate plagiarism
- The need for training graduate students to use the technology
- Implementation strategies needed to launch a project at academic institutions

One of the most important issues identified pertained to the level of awareness and acceptance of electronically distributed dissertations by the scholarly publishing community, and how the members of this community were responding to the question of prior publication in cases where derivative articles or portions of electronic dissertations were being submitted for publication to scholarly journals.

At Virginia Tech, where it was mandated in 1997 that dissertations be submitted in electronic format, concerns were expressed by both faculty and doctoral students. Their concerns pertained to the wide dissemination of doctoral research through the web, and potential effects this might have on future publication opportunities. In response to these concerns, Virginia Tech offered students several options for restricting access to their work. Students could chose to offer full access to their electronic dissertation without any restrictions; restrict access to the campus community; restrict access for a specific period of time; or restrict access entirely, which was desirable in specific cases such as with patent applications pending. These access choices have been used to varying degrees as additional institutions have started up ETD programs, with eleven institutions requiring ETDs of at least some of their students as of 2002.

While a range of options for restriction has been made available in many cases, the wide unfettered accessibility of ETDs remains the preferred option by the founders of the project, in keeping with the mission of the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD) based at Virginia Tech. Edward Fox, one of the principle investigators of the NDLTD Project

Team, contacted several publishers in 1997 to solicit support for electronic dissertations and to request policy statements on the question of prior publication in the case of ETDs. Several of the publishers that were contacted supported the initiative, as evidenced by the letters received from the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM), the Entomological Society of America, and Elsevier Science. There still seemed to be hesitation by doctoral students however [Table 1] as seen in the results of several surveys done on the Virginia Tech Campus between 1997 - 1999.

Table 1

Survey Results from Virginia Tech regarding Access to ETDs, 1997-1999

Level of Electronic Access
48% of the students chose to give their ETDs had unrestricted access
33% of the students chose to restrict access to their university community
19% of the students made their ETDs inaccessible to all
Graduate Student Survey
78% of students decided to limit access to their ETDs on advice of Faculty
13% of students decided to limit access to their ETDs on advice of Publishers
Alumni Survey
43% of alumni successfully published derivative works
100% of alumni found no resistance from publishers

According to the results from the survey of Virginia Tech alumni it seemed the *perception* that publishers would reject submissions derived from ETDs was stronger than the reality. But perception is everything where there is little hard evidence from which to draw.

We felt that by soliciting responses directly from the scholarly publishing community by means of a survey, a picture might begin to emerge of where opinion was leaning with respect to widely disseminated ETDs and to the question of prior publication. The broader question of what it means to publish in the electronic scholarly environment is paramount here.

2000 Survey (Dalton)

The approach in choosing which journal editors and publishers to contact reflects certain parameters. Because issues surrounding e-publishing were more relevant in the periodical publishing cycle, the survey was limited to publishers and editors of academic scholarly journals. It was deemed important to have representation from the for-profit and non-profit sectors, as well as to include the publications committees of scholarly societies [Table 2]. A pre-survey review of the editorial statements in dozens of journals revealed that editorial policy was set at either the level of the publisher or the society, or at the editorial level for a specific journal. There seemed to be no significant pattern that could be discerned here, but it became apparent that examples of both should be represented in the audience to be polled.

Table 2

Selected Publishers included in the 2000 ETD Survey Population

Academic Press	Elsevier Science
American Chemical Society	IEEE
American Psychological Association	Institute of Physics Journals
American Society for Microbiology	FASEB Societies
American Society of Mechanical Engineers	MCB University Press
Blackwell Science	University of Chicago Press
Cambridge University Press	Wiley & Sons

Information was drawn from journal homepages on the web, where parallel electronic versions of established scholarly journals have proliferated in recent years. Individual journals were chosen by first identifying large academic publishers or scholarly societies, and viewing the homepages for the journals, which they published. Journal homepages on the web typically offer the same information as their print counterparts including a listing of the members of the editorial board and, essential for this review, the "Instructions to Authors" or "Instructions to Contributors" statement.

The content of the final database created as a result of this review contained information drawn from 200 unique journals. Included in this database were the names of editors, publishers

and publication committee chairs, their email addresses, and relevant excerpts from the "Instruction to Authors" pages where specific reference is made to prior publication. In some cases, separate editorial policy statements proved relevant to the question of web-based documents and prior publication.

2001 Survey (Seamans)

Much of the work of the 2001 survey was based on what had been addressed in the 2000 survey, with the primary difference being the way that the journal editors and publishers were identified. Faculty and students in Virginia Tech's interdisciplinary Science and Technology Studies (STS) graduate program were concerned about the impact of ETDs on their publishing opportunities. They compiled a list of places where they were most likely to publish. The list consisted of 133 journals, 18 academic presses, and 9 commercial presses. The majority were academic in focus. Also on the list, however, were popular titles such as *Harper's Magazine*, *The Nation*, *Smithsonian Magazine*, *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Wired Magazine* [Table 3].

I did only a cursory pre-survey review of the editorial statements of these entities, since the survey instrument queried the respondents about the level at which editorial policy was set. I then identified an electronic means for contacting the journals and presses. Ten journals and two presses were dropped from the list, either because they had ceased publication (journals) or could not be identified from the information supplied. Presses were added to the list when a connection became apparent between several journal titles and those presses, making their absence from the initial list appear to be an oversight.

Table 3

Selected Journals and Presses included in the 2001 ETD Survey Population

Research Policy	Journal of Social History
Annals of Science	The Philosophical Review
Technology & Culture	Techné: Journal of Technology Studies
Postmodern Culture	Feminist Studies
Perspectives on Science	Science, Technology, and Human Values
History and Technology	Minerva
Technology Review	Canadian Bulletin of Medical History

Kluwer Academic Press	Johns Hopkins University Press
Edinburgh University Press	Duke University Press

The final list of 148 contacts – entities where an email contact could be identified – included 121 journal titles, 18 academic presses, and 9 commercial presses. Seven emails were returned as undeliverable, so a total of 141 journals or presses were contacted and asked to complete a survey. The instrument used was basically the same used by Dalton, with a few minor modifications to accommodate the difference in the population to be contacted. (Dalton had contacted only journal editors, whereas I was also querying editors for presses.)

To date, journal policy statements that include reference to ETDs have only appeared in a handful of cases, so it becomes necessary to track policies that are emerging with respect to electronically available research and the question of prior publication in more general terms, with an eye for how this might apply in the specific case of ETDs. It is our argument that by examining the policies which are emerging as scholarly publishers grapple with a coherent response to electronically available research and prior publication, and extrapolate the path of developing policies to include electronic dissertations – a unique but significant genre in scholarly publishing. A review of the policy statements of the 200 journals identified in the 2000 survey yielded some interesting results.

In reviewing the policies stated under the "Instructions to Authors" pages and elsewhere on the journal web sites, the statements regarding manuscript acceptance and prior publication seem to fall easily into one of four specific categories. By far the largest number of journals gave the familiar and standard statement, an example of which would read *Manuscripts are accepted for review with the understanding that the same work has not been published, that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and that its submission for publication has been approved by all of the listed authors and by the institutions where the work was carried out.* With only slight textual variations among them, this was the most prevalent statement found regarding prior publication in 49% of the 200 journals selected [Table 4].

Table 4.

2000 Survey - Review of Stated Policies on Prior Publication drawn from Journal Homepages

- 15% - no specific statement on prior or simultaneous publication
- 49% - standard statement
- 21% - standard statement with specific exceptions noted
- 15% - standard statement with specific inclusions outlined and described

Surprisingly, 15% of the journals had no specific reference to prior or simultaneous publication. However, 21% of the journals gave the standard policy with certain exceptions noted, often in reference to electronic documents. In this group, there were several statements that specifically allowed posting on personal websites or an internal institutional website. In several cases, policies required that if on the web, the research must be labeled a "draft" and subsequently be removed upon acceptance for publication in the journal. Finally, 15% of the policies had restrictions based on prior publication which were extended to specifically include research that may have been previously available in electronic format.

In this final group of statements, although *prior publication in electronic format* was the official restriction, it seemed that there was difficulty in defining what it meant to be 'published' in electronic format. At least nine distinct definitions of 'electronic publication' could be identified in this group of policy statements. In one case the definition identified *"material in a public database system"* which speaks to potential wide accessibility. In another case, the simple *"electronic posting of a manuscript*" is identified as a barrier for submission on the grounds of prior publication, without reference to location or level of accessibility. The lack of consensus in attempting to define what it means to "publish" in an electronic environment is worth noting. If the scholarly publishing community has difficulty defining what it means to publish in electronic format, how can it hope to adequately deal with all the issues that arise from communicating in this new medium?

In an important article on scholarly electronic publishing (Kling, & McKim, 1999) Rob Kling of the Center for Social Informatics at Indiana University points to the lack of consensus in defining electronic publishing, in particular electronic journals. He attempts to bring some clarity

to the effort by defining and classifying the different varieties of electronically available research in scholarly publishing into three categories (p.5):

1. Hybrid Paper-Electronic Journal: a package of peer-reviewed articles available through electronic channels, but whose primary distribution channels are paper-based (e.g., *Journal of Neuroscience; The Journal of Biological Chemistry*)
2. Electronic Working Articles: electronic scholarly communications that are not peer reviewed and are given a variety of labels: e-prints, working papers, pre-prints, e-magazines (e.g., *Los Alamos National Library Pre-print Archive*)
3. Electronic Journals: defined as a package of articles that is distributed to most or all of its subscribers in electronic form. Often, no parallel paper format exists. (e.g., *Psycholoquy; Journal of the Association for Information Science*)

Kling notes that in the current discussion of electronic scholarly publishing these types of distinctions among electronically available research articles are rarely made. This leads Kling to the conclusion that "reports of the exponential growth of e-journals really mean exponential growth of the hybrid Paper-Electronic or PE journals." And while the hybrid Paper-Electronic journals "bring their reputations [and] review practices that they established in the paper world and some of their readership to their electronic versions", true electronic journals, those that have no paper parallel, "face more daunting problems in establishing their legitimacy, and risk a higher failure rate" (p. 6).

Martin Blume, editor for the American Physical Society, tackled this question in a presentation at a workshop on developing practices and standards for e-publishing in science (Bloom, 1998). In his presentation he reflects beliefs commonly held by the Physics community, namely that the dissemination of research, either in print or electronically, will not preclude its acceptance for review and eventual publication.

Blume distinguishes between that which is published (small p) as a pre-print, non-refereed manuscript and that which is Published (large P) as an article that has undergone the peer-review process. For Blume's audience, the distinction is a crucial one in defining what it means to be *published.* However, peer-review is not the only criterion by which some publishers and editors

define prior publication in the case of electronically available research. In many cases other criteria seem to be more dominant in determining a status of prior publication– thus we can detect a lack of consensus in the scholarly publishing community, which is where we begin in examining the question.

The 2000 Survey:

An identical email 'cover letter' was sent to either the editor, publisher or publications committee chair for all 200 identified journal titles, introducing the topic and requesting their participation in the online survey, which they could easily access through a hypertext link embedded in the email message. The survey was designed using a template located on a server at Virginia Tech, and with the generous assistance of Tony Atkins, the Technical Director of the Digital Library and Archives at Virginia Tech. The response rate reached 27% with 46 actual surveys being completed [Table 5]. There were also eight personal email responses to the general question as it was presented in the cover letter by people who wished to comment but chose not to complete the survey.

Table 5.

Survey 2000 – Questionnaire Return Rate

Editors and publishers were contacted by email, given a brief background on ETDs and the NDLTD, and were asked to participate in the online survey titled "Electronic Theses & Dissertations: A Survey of Editors and Publishers" available at

http://lumiere.lib.vt.edu/surveys/

- 46 responded by completing the survey
- 8 offered opinions by email, without completing the survey
- Response rate: 27%

In an effort to acknowledge the significant variations in the scholarly publishing cycle between academic disciplines, the survey results, in some cases, were examined through an imposed grouping of broad subject disciplines: Physical Sciences; Life Sciences; Medical

Sciences and Social Sciences. For the purpose of informing doctoral students and their advisors, a view of how the electronic publishing issues are being addressed in their specific disciplines is helpful. Policy development with respect to electronic publishing will be shaped by the parameters unique to each discipline.

The first question was designed to gather information about the respondents and the journals with which they were affiliated [Table 6].

Table 6.

Survey 2000 - Characteristics of Survey Respondents

• 95%	Editor, Associate Editor, or Editorial Director
• 4%	Publisher
• 1%	Publications Chair or Officer
• 73%	Not-for-profit publications
• 27%	For-profit publications
• 39%	Physical Sciences [includes: Physics, Chemistry, Engineering, Astronomy]
• 34%	Life Sciences [includes: Biology, Biochemistry, Biophysics, Genetics, Mycology]
• 10%	Medical Sciences [includes: Physiology, Neurology, Immunology]
• 9%	Social Sciences [including: Psychology, Business, Marketing]

Respondents were then asked about the editorial policies of their journals, with specific reference to policies on prior publication. While in most cases there were stated policies on prior publication, far fewer had made explicit reference to research which may have been accessible on the web [Table 7].

Table 7.

Survey 2000 - Policies on Prior Publication

- 94% of respondents stated that the journal(s) had a policy on prior publication explicitly stated in 'Guidelines to Contributors' pages.

- 68% of respondents stated that the published policies **did not** specifically refer to work which was posted on the web or otherwise made electronically available

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Review of responses

A specific question on identifying what constitutes prior publication in **electronic** format listed several possible responses [Table 8]. Respondents were instructed to identify as many choices as were applicable according to the editorial practices of their journals. Included in the question was the opportunity to identify 'other' forms of electronic publications, with a text-box for comments.

Table 8.

Survey 2000 – Q. 3A: What constitutes Prior Publication in **electronic** format?

According to the editorial policy of the journal(s), which of the following would constitute prior publication in electronic format? Please indicate by selecting as many as are applicable.

- Online thesis or dissertation widely available through a web-based archive
- Online thesis or dissertation with access limited to campus or institution
- Research results available through a pre-print server (i.e. Los Alamos)
- Research results available on a personal homepage prior to peer-review
- Conference proceedings available through a web-based server
- All of the above
- None of the above
- Other – please elaborate

Responses to Question 3A

Choices made by the respondents indicate that online conference proceedings and pre-print articles are in many cases likely to receive the classification of prior publication. However in the case of online theses and dissertations, only 9% of the responses would classify *widely available* ETDs as prior publication, and only 1% of the responses indicated that ETDs with *limited availability* would be considered previously published [Table 9].

Table 9.

Survey 2000 - Responses: Question 3A. What constitutes prior publication in electronic publishing?*

- 20% - Conference proceedings available through a web-based server
- 13% - Research results available through a pre-print server (i.e. Los Alamos)
- 9% - Online thesis or dissertation widely available through a web-based archive
- 6% - Research results available on a personal homepage prior to peer-review
- 1% - Online thesis or dissertation with access limited to campus or institution
- 19% - None of the above
- 2% - All of the above
- 30% - Other [see comments]

By taking a look at the responses to Q3A through the broad discipline groupings identified earlier, it becomes clear that journals in the Physical Sciences are the most lenient in defining what constitutes prior publication in an electronic environment, with over half of the responses in this subgroup indicating that none of the choices given would be considered prior publication. Within this same subgroup, only 5% of the responses identified ETDs as examples of prior publication. However, in the other three disciplines (Life Sciences, Medical Sciences and Social Sciences) *widely available* ETDs were identified as examples of prior publication at a rate of 25% in each case, potentially impacting the acceptability of derived manuscripts for publication.

Respondents were given the opportunity to offer their opinions in a free-text format, and many of the comments proved revealing in helping to understanding what criteria the respondents were using to define prior publication in an electronic environment [Table 10]. In reviewing the responses to the survey question along with the textual comments, it became evident that four distinct criteria were being used to define prior publication in electronic publishing.

Table 10.

* Respondents were asked to identify as many of the possible answers as they felt were appropriate to the question. Percentages reflect responses, not individual respondents.

Survey 2000 - Criteria identified - prior publication in electronic format

Criterion	Comment
1. Peer review	*"Anything that has been peer-reviewed prior to publication"*
2. Level of access / dissemination	*" I would consider web-based publishing to be publishing since it is 'broadcasting' information."*
3. Lack of content revision	*" If [any electronically available material] is essentially identical to the manuscript submitted, it would represent prior publication."*
4. Stability / Legitimacy of electronic format	*"We do not recognize web-based publication as formerly published. Web-based publication does not constitute a stable form of publication that is citable as a reference."*

When examining the four identified criteria in light of the discipline groupings, the results show although policies in Physical Science journals seem the least restrictive in terms of defining what is "published", the primary criteria used to do so is peer-review.

In the Life Sciences and Medical Sciences, the dominant criterion for defining "publication" seemed to be tied to the level of accessibility or exposure the material may have received as a result of being posted on the web.

In the group of journals categorized in the Social Sciences, at least half of the responses to the question indicated that research available through either a pre-print server or a personal web-page posting would be considered "published". The issue of content revision was raised in the comments for this discipline, however. The point was made that as long as manuscript submissions were "derived from" but not identical to electronically posted materials (dissertations or otherwise), they would be acceptable for submission.

In another question, the respondents were asked more pointedly about the admissibility of content from web-based dissertations for submission to their respective journals [Table 11].

Respondents were asked to base their answers on existing policies of the journals for which they acted as editors or publishers in considering the question.

Table 11.

Survey 2000 – Question 5A: When is submission from web-based dissertation acceptable?

According to the editorial policy governing the journal(s) identified, under which of the following circumstances would a manuscript from a WEB-based dissertation be considered for publication?

- Under no circumstances. Manuscripts derived from dissertations would be considered previously published, regardless of format.
- Under no circumstances. Research made widely available via the WWW would be considered previously published.
- Only if the online dissertation has access limited to the campus or institution where it was completed.
- Only if the contents and conclusions in the manuscript were substantially different from the dissertation.
- Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would be considered on an individual basis.
- Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would be welcomed for submission
- Other – Please elaborate

The responses to Question 5A [Table 12] reveal that only 4% of those queried would refuse to consider submissions derived from dissertations, whether in print or electronically available, on the basis of prior publication. A full 29% would consider such submissions on an individual basis, and even more heartening, 33% answered that they would welcome submissions for publication that were derived from web-based dissertations.

Table 12

Survey 2000 - Responses: Question 5A.

- 47% - Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would be welcomed for submission
- 19% - Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would be considered on an individual basis.
- 19% - Other – Please elaborate
- 6% - Only if the online dissertation has access limited to the campus or institution where it was completed.
- 6% - Only if the contents and conclusions in the manuscript were substantially different from the dissertation.
- 4% - Under no circumstances. Manuscripts derived from dissertations would be considered previously published, regardless of format.
- 0% - Under no circumstances. Research made widely available via the WWW would be considered previously published.

With a combined total of 66% of the responses indicating that manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would either be welcomed or considered on an individual basis, these results should prove encouraging for many doctoral students and their advisors on the issue of manuscript submission subsequent to web-posting.

A review of the responses based on subject discipline reveals that in all areas other than the Medical Sciences, manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would either be welcomed for submission or at least considered on an individual basis 73% of the time. Those respondents representing journals in the Medical Sciences would consider such submissions 50% of the time based on the responses to this question.

Several comments offered by the respondents (to whom anonymity was assured) reveal the reasoning behind the policies they endorse as editors and publishers on the issues surrounding ETDs and prior publication policies. For example:

"I view theses as a completely different form of publication. We expect that the results will eventually be published and do not discriminate against the student because the thesis is widely available."

"We believe that distribution as a dissertation is sufficiently different from a publication in a refereed journal as to not be of concern."

"I would see electronic availability of a thesis as only equivalent to what has long been available through microfilm and as not constituting prior publication."

"...anyone can post anything they want on the web without compromising the acceptability of that material for subsequent submission to the .....[Journal], UNLESS posting on the site requires that the material pass through some kind of peer-review. In this case, it becomes no longer acceptable for submission."

" Communication in science and medicine will not be well served by standing in the way of publication in many versions, and the .....[Journal] is willing to consider for publication e-prints that have been posted on websites so long as their status as e-prints is clear. In the meantime, authors, editors and publishers have more work to do to make the status of articles entirely clear. This is the age of transparency rather than paternalism"

Such comments seem to indicate that regardless of format, if a paper had been refereed, then it was considered previously published. However, based on the survey responses this criterion was not the dominant one in all disciplines. In the Life Sciences and Medical Sciences, a work which had been made widely available through posting on a website was in some cases considered to have been "published" based on electronic accessibility alone, and, therefore, subject to possible rejection for publication in an established print journal on this basis.

As members of the various academic disciplines begin discussing the issues surrounding electronic publishing and its application to the scholarly communication process in their own academic communities, it is expected that the trends toward acceptance and adoption will

increase. It should be noted that disciplinary distinctions are important to make in considering the issues. Kling (1999) points out that the current discussion about electronic publishing is not going far enough in acknowledging the disciplinary differences in scholarly communication.

> Unfortunately, few analyses of scholarly e-publishing explicitly acknowledge the differences in communication practices from field to field. Terms like "being published" are treated as categorical. However, the actual communicative practices that constitute publishing vary from one field to another. (p. 2, Preprint)

The 2001 Survey:

As with the 2000 survey, an email 'cover letter' was sent to the editor, publisher or publications committee chair for the 141 journals and presses identified. The topic of ETDs as prior publications was presented and participation in the online survey was requested. A hypertext link to the survey was embedded in the email message. The first message was sent on January 22, 2001, and a reminder was sent on February 6, 2001.

The response rate reached 33% with 46 actual surveys being completed [Table 13]. There were also 36 personal email responses to the general question as it was presented in the cover letter by people who wished to comment but chose not to complete the survey.

Table 13.

Survey 2001 – Summary of Responses

As with the first survey, editors and publishers were contacted by email, given a brief background on ETDs and the NDLTD, and asked to participate in the online survey titled "Electronic Theses & Dissertations: 2001 Survey of Editors and Publishers," available at

http://lumiere.lib.vt.edu/surveys/

- 46 responded by completing the survey
- 36 offered opinions by email, without completing the survey
- Response rate: 58%

The first question gathered information about the respondents and the journals with which they were affiliated [Table 14].

Table 14.

Survey 2001 – Characteristics of Survey Respondents

- 62% Editor, Associate Editor, or Editorial Director
- 10% Publisher
- 28% Other

- 74% Not-for-profit publications
- 26% For-profit publications

The question about the broad subject areas of the journals and publishers revealed that the majority were more interdisciplinary than in the 2000 Survey. (Respondents were asked to identify as many of the possible answers as they felt were appropriate to the question. Therefore, percentages reflect responses, not individual respondents.)

Extrapolating from the data, the general categories were:

- 6% Physics, Mathematics and Statistics
- 8% Chemistry, Biology and Biochemistry
- 12% Engineering, Environmental Studies
- 16% Social Sciences
- 14% Life Sciences, Health and Medicine, Psychology
- 44% Other

Those who selected **Other** identified their journals or presses as covering such diverse areas History, History of Medicine, Humanities, and Philosophy, as well as an array of additional topics.

Respondents were asked for information on the editorial policies of their journals or presses, with specific reference to policies on prior publication. As with the 2000 study, most had stated

policies on prior publication, but fewer had addressed the idea of research that had been made accessible on the web [Table 15].

Table 15.

2001 Survey - Policies on Prior Publication

- 56% of respondents stated that the journal or press had a policy on prior publication specifically stated in the 'Guidelines to Contributors' or as a statement of Editorial Policy.

- 72% of respondents stated that these policies **did not** specifically refer to work that may have been made electronically accessible on the web.

Review of responses

Question 3A was intended to identifying what constituted prior publication in electronic format for the journal or press. Respondents were asked to identify as many choices as were applicable, as determined by the editorial policies for the journal or press. Included in the question was the opportunity to identify 'other' forms of electronic publications, with a text-box for comments [Table 16].

Table 16.

Survey 2001 - Question 3A: What constitutes Prior Publication?*

- 5% - Online thesis or dissertation with access limited to campus or institution
- 8% - Research results available on a personal homepage prior to peer-review
- 10% - Research results available through a pre-print server (i.e. Los Alamos)
- 15% - Conference proceedings available through a web-based server
- 15% - Online thesis or dissertation widely available through a web-based archive
- 3% - All of the above
- 16% - None of the above

* Respondents were asked to identify as many of the possible answers as they felt were appropriate to the question. Therefore, percentages reflect responses, not individual respondents.

- 28% - Other – please elaborate

Comments made by the respondents revealed that for some this was a new area and had not previously been considered: "We don't have a policy about any form of e-publication, so this is just my guess about where we'd come down…." Others indicated that they would expect a submission to their journal to be different from a thesis or dissertation: "Dissertations are too long for published articles and must be rewritten, thus would not necessarily count as previously published." Another respondent wrote, "Before publication, a thesis undergoes extensive revisions. The resulting book is an entirely new work and, therefore, e-posting of the original thesis does not constitute publication."

Another question asked the respondents specifically about circumstances in which a manuscript derived from an ETD would be considered for publication [Table 17].

Table 17.

Survey 2001 - *Q. 5A*

According to the editorial policy governing the enterprise [journal or press] identified, under which circumstances would a manuscript derived from a WEB-based dissertation be considered for publication?

- 33% - Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations are welcome for submission.
- 29% - Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations are considered on an individual basis.
- 27% - Other – Please elaborate
- 6% - Only if the contents and conclusions in the manuscript were substantially different from the dissertation.
- 2% - Under no circumstances. Manuscripts derived from research published as part of a dissertation are considered previously published, regardless of format.
- 2% - Under no circumstances. Manuscripts derived from research made widely available via the web are considered previously published, regardless of format.
- 0% - Only if the online dissertation has access limited to the campus or institution where it was completed.

By combining the two most frequent responses, the results show that in 62% of the cases, respondents would either welcome manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations, or would at least consider such manuscripts on a case-by-case basis. Once, again, the comments made in response to this question are particularly telling, for example:

> "Please note 'derived from' – it does not have to be substantially different but it must be reworked."

> "Again, we've yet to set policy on this. My guess is that how we'll come down depends on our assessment of (1) whether our review process involves substantially more peer review than is typically applied to dissertations, and (2) the difference between the amount of exposure afforded by the prior availability of the dissertation online and the amount of exposure any derivative paper would receive via publication in our journal. It might turn out that our policy would be to decide on a case by case basis."

General comments received both as part of the 2001 Survey and also as email sent in lieu of completing the survey provide a narrative that illustrates the issues that interest or concern those who are, in many cases, just realizing that electronic publishing is changing the face of scholarly communication.

> "In the emerging electronic environment, the very meaning of "publication" is obviously undergoing significant change. Nevertheless, the central issue is public access to the finished work. If that is available, then the work does not require another outlet - hence it is published. Virginia Tech is doing its students considerable harm by ignoring the central concept behind publication."

> "Issue also need to be addressed – article already published before thesis concluded, so journal owns copyright; does copyright then have to be released to allow for electronic publication? I don't know."

> "We are dealing with a universe of people with limited means. If they can get something for free on the web, why should they buy it? These web dissertations seriously cut into the market for books by presses that are hanging on, financially, by their fingernails…."

> "Your email message was passed on to me for response. Please note that we do indeed consider posted electronic theses and dissertations to be previously published material and would not accept them as original publications."

Other comments indicate that the word *derived* made a significant amount of difference for the respondents:

> "Manuscripts derived from dissertations, web or print form, would be sent for peer reviews, and revisions would be expected prior to publication."

> "Any book that we publish goes through an extensive review process, often with several rounds of revision. In cases where the project originated as a dissertation, the final book is generally three or four years of work away from that dissertation. A dissertation is written with the author knowing the entire audience, and with the assurance that the audience will read it (indeed they are paid to do so by the institution). The whole structure of argument in a book, where the audience is anything but assured, is completely different."

> "I consider papers based on chapters of a thesis or dissertation to be appropriate submissions to my journal. Chapters in theses and dissertations invariably need a lot of additional work to turn them into publishable papers. Typically a chapter submitted as a paper is not adequately self-contained. References to other chapters, for example, need to be removed and some substantial amount of discussion or argument needs to be put in their places. The author may also wish to rewrite simply because new ideas, arguments, or perspectives came up after the thesis or dissertation was written. Submitting papers based on chapters in theses and dissertations is a good first step in a young scholars career. The

appearance of a paper on the web is irrelevant since such postings are unlikely to be permanent."

Conclusions

The policies of many journals with regard to Internet posting and prior publication are still in flux, as evidenced by many of the responses to these two surveys. When pressed to define prior publication in the electronic medium, many publishers and editors naturally draw from standard practice in print publishing and identify peer-review as the one element that determines the publication status of written research. Though this is obviously still an unresolved issue, the number of responses indicating that an ETD will not preclude book or journal publication of research should encourage students and their faculty advisors who are working in an increasingly electronic environment.

A comparison of the results from the 2000 and 2001 survey [Table 18] seems to offer some concrete evidence to doctoral students and their advisors that the *perception* of rejection by the scholarly community of manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations is stronger than the reality.

Table 18.

Question 3A		
What constitutes prior publication in electronic publishing?	**2000**	**2001**
Online thesis or dissertation widely available through web-based archive	9%	15%
Online thesis or dissertation with access limited to campus or institution	1%	5%
Research results available through a pre-print server	13%	10%
Research results available on a personal homepage prior to peer-review	6%	8%
Conference proceedings available through a web-based server	20%	15%
All of the above	2%	3%
None of the above	19%	15%
Other	30%	28%
Question 5A		
When is a submission from an electronic dissertation acceptable?	**2000**	**2001**
Under no circumstances. Manuscripts derived from dissertations would be considered previously published, regardless of format	4%	2%
Under no circumstances. Research made widely available via the WWW would be considered previously published	0%	2%
Only if the online dissertation has access limited to the campus or institution where it was completed.	6%	0%
Only if contents and conclusions in the manuscript were substantially different from the dissertation.	6%	6%

Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would be considered on an individual basis.	19%	29%
Manuscripts derived from web-based dissertations would be welcomed for submission	47%	33%
Other	19%	27%

As with any new and significantly different pattern of communication, there is a need to continue to build a picture of where opinion is heading with respect to widely disseminated ETDs and their status as "publications." The discussion and the collection of data must continue, so that a more comprehensive view of the role of ETDs in scholarly communication can be determined. It is only by ongoing discussion and debate that students and their advisors, along with editors and publishers can determine the most appropriate roles for technology in scholarly communications.

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