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# Are Electronic Theses and Dissertations Radically Changing the Nature and Scope of Doctoral Research Dissemination and Use?

## Background

- ▶ Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) and ETD digital libraries can radically change the nature and scope of the dissemination and use of doctoral research
- ▶ ETDs are a valuable resource for nurse scholars worldwide
- ▶ An increasing number of university libraries are making ETDs accessible online and free
- ▶ Many universities worldwide now require graduates to submit theses or dissertations electronically
- ▶ Graduate student research should represent the state of the art in the science of nursing
- ▶ ETDs provide a technologically advanced medium with multimedia capabilities
- ▶ Instant electronic access to graduate student research from anywhere in the world is advantageous
- ▶ Electronic access provides nurse scholars opportunities to discover research that they might otherwise not know exists
- ▶ ETDs contribute to the dissemination and preservation of knowledge
- ▶ ETDs will be used more often than paper or microfilm theses and dissertations

## Purpose of the Study

To gain information in regard to the awareness and use of ETDs and ETD digital libraries among faculty, current graduate students, and alumni of graduate programs in nursing in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States

## Research Questions

1. What is the nature and scope of current usage of ETDs and ETD digital libraries by faculty of schools of nursing, current graduate students, and alumni of graduate programs in nursing?
2. What trends, if any, are apparent in knowledge and usage within these different groups and within different countries?
3. What benefits, if any, have ETD users/authors experienced, and what factors enabled these?
4. What difficulties, if any, have ETD users/authors experienced, and what factors have contributed to these?

## Methods

- ▶ A descriptive online survey conducted via "SurveyMonkey"
- ▶ Purposeful sampling of schools in the vanguard of nursing ETD development
- ▶ An email invitation with a link to the study site was sent to potential participants
- ▶ The ETD Survey was researcher generated and piloted
  - 11 questions about participant characteristics
  - 14 questions about knowledge and use of ETDs and ETD digital libraries

## Results

- ▶ 44% reported knowing how to access ETDs from their institution's digital library
- ▶ 18% reported knowing how to access ETDs through a national or international ETD digital library
- ▶ 27% reported having cited their ETD in a publication
- ▶ A significant number of PhD alumni referenced an ETD in a publication or included their ETD on their CV

## Conclusions

- ▶ The majority of nursing faculty, students and alumni have little knowledge in regard to accessing ETD digital libraries
- ▶ ETDs are not used to their fullest potential
- ▶ Our study sets the stage for future research and addresses the potential for educational enhancement

Table 1. By Characteristics, Percent of Participants who Know How to Access ETDs (N=209)

	N	Know how to access ETDs in their institution's Digital Library	Know how to access ETDs through a national or international Digital Library
		Percent	Percent
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	37	40	24
Female	172	44	16
<b>Age</b>			
21-30	27	22	22
31-40	38	53	18
41-50	63	52	19
51-60	69	41	16
61-70	11	36	9
71-80	1	0	0
<b>Working or attending school in</b>			
Australia	33	64**	33**
New Zealand	1	0	100
United Kingdom	103	38	16
United States	66	47	14
<b>Highest Degree</b>			
Bachelors	46	28	13
Masters	91	44	13
PhD	59	56*	27
Other	13	38	23
<b>Affiliation</b>			
Nursing Faculty	99	49	19
MS Student	14	14	0
PhD Student	54	48	19
MS Alumnus	6	17	17
PhD Alumnus	11	45	27
Other	25	32	16
<b>Conducting Research</b>			
Yes	130	55***	25***
No	79	24	5

Note. \* = P=.04; \*\* = P=.03; \*\*\* = P<.001.

Table 2. ETD Digital Libraries Generally Used to Search for ETDs

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
<b>Your Institution's digital library collection</b>	36	76
<b>ProQuest Dissertations &amp; Theses database (PQDT)</b>	21	46
<b>ETHOS (UK Electronic Theses Online Service)</b>	9	19
<b>Royal College of Nursing Steinberg Collection</b>	9	19
<b>ADT (Australasian Digital Theses) now ARO (Australian Research Online)</b>	8	18
<b>Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD) Scirus ETD Search</b>	4.3	9
<b>Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD) VTLS Visualizer</b>	1	2
<b>DART-Europe (European ETDs)</b>	1	2
<b>None</b>	44	92

Note. Participants were asked to select the ETD digital libraries that they generally used from a pull down menu of options.

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