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## Welcome to the Journal of Electronic Theses and Dissertations (J-ETD)

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Welcome to the Journal of Electronic Theses and Dissertations (J-ETD)

Edward A. Fox

J-ETD Executive Editor

NDLTD Executive Director and Chairman of the Board

February 2021

Invitation:

On behalf of the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD; see our website with multiple aliases: [ndltd.org](http://ndltd.org), [theses.org](http://theses.org), [dissertations.org](http://dissertations.org)), I welcome you to the first volume of J-ETD. Now is the time to broadly share through an archival journal some of the most interesting discussions related to the global movement around ETDs. We hope you will find this journal to be of interest, and will spread the word that it is globally accessible as an open access archival forum empowering graduate student researchers and universities to broadly contribute to scholarship, knowledge, education, and understanding. We hope you and your associates will use the articles contained herein to help students, researchers, scholars, administrators, librarians, archivists, publishers, and diverse others to expand and improve learning and scholarly communication. We also encourage you and your colleagues to contribute your works and thoughts to this endeavor, or to offer your assistance in other ways, e.g., if you have interest and skill for reviewing or publicity.

Stakeholders Like You:

J-ETD is for people like you! This is clear from the statement of journal aims and scope. Please read and publish in J-ETD, and spread the word.

Graduate students preparing theses or dissertations can benefit from the best practice reporting herein to learn how to plan, organize, write, and publish their findings using improved communication methods and technologies, so they will be discovered, read, cited, archived, and serve to guide others. Graduate school and related personnel can benefit from knowing how to train the world's future scholars to best share their findings, and to contribute to the prominence of their institution. Librarians can better understand how to serve students to aid their research and education, as well as to effectively manage institutional repositories.

Archivists have an opportunity to save future costs through guidance on the creation of archival versions of works -- passing archival skills to future authors. Regional and national institutions can save costs regarding depository and open access mandates. Open access advocates can readily explain best methods, in an environment where open access is encouraged and economically feasible without complications.

I come from the world of computer science, involved in digital libraries, information retrieval, library and information science, electronic publishing, text analytics, natural language processing, artificial intelligence, hypermedia, data science, networked information systems, and related topics. In all of these fields, working with ETDs presents many challenges and opportunities. I encourage my colleagues to address those challenges and publish their findings in J-ETD.

## History:

In 1987 I attended a workshop in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA, related to using new methods of electronic markup and publishing to expand access to dissertations. Since then, the idea of electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) has spread globally; it has been an exciting adventure! In 1988 we converted a few Virginia Tech dissertations into an electronic form using SGML, a precursor of HTML and XML. In 1992-1993, plans were devised by a design team for "The Capture and Storage of Electronic Theses and Dissertations", sponsored by the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI), Virginia Tech, the Council of Graduate Schools, and University Microfilms Int. In 1993, the launch, by Adobe, of Portable Document Format (PDF) opened the possibility of student thesis authors having an easy way to share their dissertations and theses electronically.

Two associations in the southeastern region of USA -- SURA and SOLINET -- hosted supportive workshops in August of both 1994 and 1996. In December 1996 I chaired the Technical Committee meeting for the National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD), held after the CNI Fall Meeting, and in March 1997, the first NDLTD Steering Committee meeting. That was shortly after Virginia Tech's 1/1/1997 requirement was instituted for all theses and dissertations to be submitted electronically. By September 1997, reflecting global interest, NDLTD transitioned to be the acronym for our new title: Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations. Thus, NDLTD as a global organization really began in 1997; it began its formal corporate existence as an international non-profit educational organization in 2003.

Funding greatly aided the early spread of the ETD movement. A 1/1/1996 award by SURA funded “Development and Beta Testing of the Monticello Electronic Library Thesis and Dissertation Program”. A September 1996 award by the US Department of Education supported “Improving Graduate Education with a National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations”. These two projects enabled developing grass-roots support for ETDs first in the Southeast and then across the USA. Talks by a growing number of passionate supporters spread the word in many countries. In the early years I was fortunate to be able to give talks in locations around the globe, e.g., in 1997 (Canada, Singapore, Portugal), 1998 (Russia, Mexico, Hong Kong), 1999 (Taiwan, Japan, France), 2000 (Poland), 2001 (South Africa, Spain, Germany, Uruguay), 2002 (PRC, Brazil), etc. Starting late in 2000, UNESCO funded the multilingual “*International Guide for the Creation of Electronic Theses and Dissertations*”.

#### Conferences:

NDLTD has sponsored an annual international symposium & conference. Numbers, years, and locations are:

1. 1998 Memphis, TN, USA
2. 1999 Blacksburg, VA, USA
3. 2000 St. Petersburg, FL, USA
4. 2001 Pasadena, CA, USA
5. 2002 Provo, UT, USA
6. 2003 Berlin, Germany
7. 2004 Lexington, KY, USA

8. 2005 Sydney, Australia
9. 2006 Quebec City, Canada
10. 2007 Uppsala, Sweden
11. 2008 Aberdeen, Scotland
12. 2009 Pittsburgh, PA, USA
13. 2010 Austin, TX, USA
14. 2011 Cape Town, South Africa
15. 2012 Lima, Peru
16. 2013 Hong Kong, China
17. 2014 Leicester, UK
18. 2015 New Delhi, India
19. 2016 Lille, France
20. 2017 Washington, DC, USA
21. 2018 Taiwan
22. 2019 Porto, Portugal
23. 2020 UAEU virtual
24. 2021 UAEU hybrid

J-ETD plans to publish extended/improved versions of the best works from this conference series, starting with that of 2020.

### Moving Forward:

Having worked in this field for almost 35 years, I am sure that J-ETD will have a bright future. As long as we have universities and graduate programs, there will be millions of students preparing theses and dissertations. As long as technology advances, methods of sharing research results will keep improving, and students will need to learn and utilize those methods. As long as scholarship continues, new scholars who were graduate students will carry forward what they learned in preparing ETDs into their further efforts. As long as university libraries continue, they will shepherd and help share the works of their students. As long as learners and researchers seek models for their writing, and understanding of what was done in the past that might help in their work, having access to many millions of ETDs will serve as a valuable resource. As long as people build new methods and systems for making documents accessible, there will be those who will apply and advance those in the context of ETDs.

I hope all such stakeholders with help make J-ETD serve these and other related ongoing needs.