Current ETD practices and workflows in North Carolina

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Introduction
The authors, from different departments at one university, both showed up at an OETDA conference without knowing the other was attending. We asked each other if the Libraries and the Graduate School might benefit from greater communication, and then: How do other institutions offering electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) handle the inter-departmental communication and collaboration needs of such programs? This study examines current practices among ETD administrators in North Carolina and in current national literature, with special attention to communication, collaboration, workflows, and divisions of labor.

Methods
**Survey:** A brief, 15-question survey went to twenty-three individuals identified on institution’s web sites as involved in the ETD process.

**Literature review:** We surveyed current (since 2003) library and higher education articles on collaboration, workflows, and divisions of labor.

Findings

**Overview:** Thirty-seven NC institutions offer at least one advanced degree; most require a thesis or dissertation. Thirteen (35%) accept or require electronic submission. Our survey went to twenty-three email addresses at those thirteen. Three emails bounced, twelve of the remaining twenty responded to the survey, and ten completed it, so 50% of recipients completed the survey. We discuss the most interesting and relevant findings. Information on UNCG is included in some charts for a more complete picture of NC ETD institutions. All respondents say their graduate school is involved in ETD, and most say the library is involved. Campus or library IT personnel are frequently involved, but academic departments rarely are.

Question: Describe collaboration and communication
25% choose “none,” 50% say “frequent,” and all respondents rate communication and collaboration identically. Their importance in developing programs shows in the literature and in a respondent’s comment: “We established an ETD working group that met several times a semester in the beginning; less frequent now that the process is up and running smoothly.”

Question: Which personnel perform what ETD tasks?
We asked for position titles, not names, but departments might have been the more useful information. Our chart color-codes for department when that could be determined. ETD tasks are evenly split between graduate schools and other areas, with libraries strongly represented. (Archives is color-coded as library.) Notable: one institution’s grad school executive assistant is responsible for every ETD task. And, had we asked respondents to specify the “other” tasks, we would know what a digital repository librarian does with ETDs at another school.

Figure 1. Survey participants

![Figure 1. Survey participants](image)

**Figure 2. Is electronic required?**

![Figure 2. Is electronic required?](image)

**Figure 3. Departments involved**

![Figure 3. Departments involved](image)

**Figure 4. Divisions of labor in NC ETD programs**

![Figure 4. Divisions of labor in NC ETD programs](image)

**Figure 5. Communication & collaboration**

![Figure 5. Communication & collaboration](image)

**Figure 6. Uploads**

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**Conclusion**
This survey reveals the variety of structures and procedures in ETD programs in NC, but also many commonalities: like primary involvement of both graduate school and library, immediate public access, converging trends in digital storage, and written procedures or workflows. Results also show language issues caused respondents to interpret questions differently than we had intended. Future research could more accurately pinpoint ETD processes in the detail necessary to make more specific recommendations for improvement. Still, no matter the variety of systems for managing ETDs, or how automated or mature the program, clearly it remains imperative that departments establish and maintain a regular dialogue to share perspectives, new ideas and technologies, and suggestions for improvement.