If you digitise them they will come: creating a discoverable and accessible thesis collection

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Project aim
To increase the discoverability and accessibility of our unique print only thesis collection

What we did
• Digitised our print only thesis collection (over 3,000 + titles)
• Uploaded collection into University Open Access Repository
• Received project funding from the Division of Research to mark the University’s 125th anniversary

Technical specifications
Digitisation of theses outsourced
• OCR PDFs @ 300dpi + metadata
• 1 thesis = 1 file
• XML files (+ metadata from LMS)
• batch uploaded to Repository

Project outcome
All theses
• Are discoverable in Repository
• Restricted status until assessed for open access
• Available via mediated request
Previously undiscernable relevant research is accessible

Benefits of a digitised collection
Preservation of scholarly record
Thesis content accessible to a wider audience
Streamlined service for client with increased access eg. 24/7 global access
Greater discoverability contributes to the University’s reputation and ranking

Evidence of use digitised print thesis collection
Top 10 most downloaded theses
• Only from 1979 – 2006
• contain PhDs and Masters by Research
• represent disciplines including Education, Law, History, Geography & Engineering
Oldest digitised thesis is from 1923

Pathway to Open Access
Open Access = Thesis priority + Assessment & enrichment
Thesis titles to be assessed for open access are prioritised in two concurrent streams
1. Client requests, received via Repository
2. List of digitised theses, currently restricted in Repository
   a. older than 10 years
   b. newer than 10 years

Elements assessed for Open Access
Copyright/usage rights
Author Permissions based on thesis age
QA authority record & metadata enrichment
Proprietary material assessed and removed
Publisher permissions for use assessed
Published within 10 years
No permission needed
Make open with disclaimer
Preparation of authority record
Publication details
Authors name
Metadata enrichment
Abstract
Department
Thesis type
Year
Pagination
Related URLs

Who is accessing the collection?

International repository rankings
5 of 48 institutional repositories in Australia
124 of 2197 institutional repositories worldwide

What have we learned?
Older research remains relevant and valuable
Providing discoverability and access to older research through an institutional repository is a crucial library service

Acknowledgements
Thank you to all my colleagues who worked on this project and those who assisted in producing this poster.