2017

Open Access and the Graduate Author: A Dissertation Anxiety Manual

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Chapter Eleven

Open Access and the Graduate Author

A Dissertation Anxiety Manual

Jill Cirasella and Polly Thistlethwaite

The process of completing a dissertation is stressful—deadlines are scary, editing is hard, formatting is tricky, and defending is terrifying.[1] (And, of course, postgraduate employment is often uncertain.) Now that dissertations are deposited and distributed electronically, students must perform yet another anxiety-inducing task: deciding whether they want to make their dissertations immediately open access (OA) or, at universities that require OA, coming to terms with openness. For some students, mostly in the humanities and some of the social sciences, who hope to transform their dissertations into books, OA has become a bogeyman, a supposed saboteur of book contracts and destroyer of careers.

At a panel discussion about dissertations and access at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), Kathleen Fitzpatrick, director of scholarly communication at the Modern Language Association, expresses regret that students must decide about access to their dissertations at that stressful time:

> I have thought for quite a while that it's a shame that graduate students have to make this decision about the future disposition of their work at what is really a moment of peak anxiety for them. . . . You don't know what's coming and yet here you are suddenly having to make this long-term decision about the disposition of the document and what might become of it over the Internet. (cited in Smith-Cruz 2014, clip 3)

This chapter examines the various access-related anxieties that contribute to that "moment of peak anxiety." It is a kind of diagnostic and statistical

manual of dissertation anxieties—a "Dissertation Anxiety Manual," if you will—describing anxieties surrounding book contracts, book sales, plagiarism, juvenilia, the ambiguity of the term *online*, and changes in scholarly research and production.[2]

In our examination, we primarily cite blog posts, news articles, and other nonrefereed sources because this is where most of the debate about OA dissertations occurs and where anxieties are most freely aired. (Of course, anxiety-laced articles feed anxieties among graduate students, advisors, and publishers, creating a vicious circle of misgivings and misinformation about OA.) There are relatively few peer-reviewed articles on these issues; we hope this chapter inspires researchers to study them in depth and over time.

ANXIETIES ABOUT FINDING BOOK PUBLISHERS

The top anxiety about OA dissertations appears to be the fear that the dissertations' ready online availability adversely affects prospects for turning them into first books. (This anxiety does not, for the most part, apply to students in the sciences, where journal articles, not books, are the primary units of scholarship.) Of course, most scholars care less about publishing a book and more about what a book makes possible, or at least easier, in today's academic climate. They believe that publishing a dissertation-based book is required, or at least desired, for finding and keeping a tenure-track academic job, becoming a known scholar, and earning tenure. In short, they feel, rightly or wrongly, that their short- and long-term livelihoods depend on being able to publish their dissertations as books.

This cascade of anxieties is not new, but it shot to the fore of academia's consciousness when the American Historical Association (AHA 2013) released a statement urging universities "to adopt a policy that allows the embargoing of completed history PhD dissertations in digital form for as many as six years" (para. 1). The AHA (2013) justified its call for six-year embargoes with an assertion that an "increasing number of university presses are reluctant to offer a publishing contract to newly minted PhDs whose dissertations have been freely available via online sources" (para. 1) and a reminder that "[h]istory has been and remains a book-based discipline" (para. 3). However, both of those claims generated controversy—the first for not being clearly supported by the evidence and the second for failing to see beyond the status quo.

Is it true that an "increasing number" of university presses are biased against manuscripts based on OA dissertations—or is it a rumor based on superficial logic and "anecdotes, ghost stories, and fear" (Patton 2013, para. 23)? There are certainly some publishers who are explicit about their prejudice. For example, Charles Backus, director of Texas A&M University Press,

said that, because of the increase in online availability of dissertations, his press has become "much more reluctant to consider works based on dissertations than in the past" (Howard 2011, para. 16). And the University of Manchester Press explicitly states on their website their disinclination to publish dissertation-based books:

> Because PhD theses are increasingly freely and widely available in digital repositories, our policy is that we will not consider books based on theses for publication. In a small number of cases, where the research is of exceptionally high quality and broad appeal, we can consider a book that takes thesis research as its starting point and expands upon it significantly, on the strict understanding that it must have been entirely rewritten and restructured for a wider audience. (Manchester University Press n.d.)

Of course, many students do not communicate directly with presses while they are writing their dissertations. Rather, they rely on the advice of their advisors and other senior scholars, most of whom matured academically in a pre-OA world and many of whom have heard anecdotes—or third-party retellings of anecdotes—about difficulties publishing dissertation-based books. They, like former AHA president William Cronon (2013), worry that OA dissertations "*might* [italics his] make it more difficult for early-career colleagues to find publishers" and favor preemptively closing dissertations over facing what *might* happen (para. 28). Or, as Kathleen Fitzpatrick puts it, "with all kinds of good intentions, advisors . . . have a tendency to persuade graduate students and others that we should really be more conservative" (cited in Smith-Cruz 2014, clip 3).

Are these well-intentioned encouragements to temporarily or permanently restrict access well founded? That question loops us back to the question of whether an increasing number of publishers are exhibiting prejudice against OA dissertations. Clearly some publishers are. But there seem to be many more with no such prejudice.

For example, Philip Leventhal, senior editor at Columbia University Press, says, "In my time at Columbia, it's never come up that we've decided not to publish a book because it was available online" (cited in Smith-Cruz 2014, clip 4). Also, Doug Armato (2013), director of the University of Minnesota Press, revealed that his press "would consider, have considered, and indeed regularly publish, single-authored books that are revised from 100% previously available material" (para. 4). Columbia and Minnesota are not outliers: Prompted by the AHA statement to investigate the situation, Peter Berkery, executive director of the Association of American University Presses, queried fifteen press directors and reports, "I haven't found one person who has said if it is available open access, we won't publish it" (cited in Cohen 2013, para. 19).

Some presses are more than merely willing to publish books based on OA dissertations—they actively credit openness for leading them to publishable dissertations. For example, Harvard University Press's assistant editor Brian Distelberg is "always looking out for exciting new scholarship that might make for a good book." For him, "to whatever extent open access to a dissertation increases the odds of its ideas being read and discussed more widely, I tend to think it increases the odds of my hearing about them" (cited in Harvard University Press 2013, para. 5). Indeed, Harvard University Press (2013) sums up their sentiment thus: "If you can't find it, you can't sign it" (para. 6).

Furthermore, some presses appreciate that openness promotes conversation and useful revision. Leventhal explains that "you get a response and you get feedback, and that will in turn help shape your project" (cited in Smith-Cruz 2014, clip 4). Indeed, the value of public conversation in shaping the minds and works of junior scholars has been acknowledged for centuries. For example, Renaissance humanist Colluccio Salutati considers *disputatio*, or public scholarly debate, essential to training the mind and refining claims; he considers it "absurd to talk with oneself between walls and in solitude" (cited in Covey 2013, 546).

Rather than countering mere anecdote with anecdote, we should also look at data. As mentioned previously, there are not yet many research studies investigating the effect of OA on prospects for publishing dissertation-based books (for those interested, the field is wide open!), but there is one recent study of note: "Do Open Access Electronic Theses and Dissertations Diminish Publishing Opportunities in the Social Sciences and Humanities? Findings from a 2011 Survey of Academic Publishers" (Ramirez et al. 2013). The authors received responses from fifty-three university presses, with 9.8 percent indicating that manuscripts derived from OA theses and dissertations are "always welcome," 43.9 percent considering such manuscripts "on a case-by-case basis," and 26.8 percent welcoming them "only if the contents and conclusions are substantially different" from the thesis or dissertation (374).

Graduate students might initially be alarmed that only 9.8 percent "always welcome" such manuscripts, but it is important to remember that publishers consider *all* manuscripts on a case-by-case basis. Similarly, just about all publishers expect dissertation-based manuscripts to differ significantly from the original dissertation or work with authors to overhaul the manuscript before publishing it (see, for example, Harvard University Press 2013; Smith-Cruz 2014; and especially Wissoker 2013). This is because a dissertation, as long and sophisticated as it might be, is nevertheless a student work written for a specific audience, not a book written for broader consumption.

Therefore, it is reasonable to combine the groups who answered "always welcome," "on a case-by-case basis," and "only if the contents and conclusions are substantially different." Doing so, we see that fully 80.5 percent of

respondents are willing to consider manuscripts based on OA theses and dissertations—certainly not every respondent but the overwhelming majority.[3]

ANXIETIES ABOUT BOOK SALES

As both anecdotes and research have shown, most publishers do not discriminate against manuscripts based on dissertations, even OA dissertations. They understand the distinctions between a dissertation and a book and the in-depth and inevitable revising, reframing, and rewriting that separate them. William Germano (2005), former editor at Columbia University Press and Routledge and a scholar of the book, writes in *From Dissertation to Book*, "To the new PhD's eager question—'What do I do now that I'm done?'— [there are] answers rather than an answer. . . . The key to any of them, though, is revision" (1). Similarly, Patrick Alexander, director of Penn State University Press, tells the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "The best advice I could give students . . . is to remember that books and dissertations are two distinct species" (cited in Howard 2011, para. 23).

However, some publishers do discriminate against book proposals that spring from dissertations, and those who do are driven by anxieties of their own: dismay at shrinking per-title sales, fears about libraries' purchasing habits, and concerns about staying financially afloat. Jerome Singerman, senior editor at the University of Pennsylvania Press, puts it this way: "Although university presses are nonprofit institutions, we are totally driven by and reactive to the market. . . . We need to publish in a way that is financially viable . . . and there is a threshold beneath which we just can't go for sales" (cited in Smith-Cruz 2014, clip 5).

If university presses are going to continue in their current form, then they must indeed maintain a certain level of sales. (Whether they will or should stay essentially as they are is an important issue but beyond the scope of this chapter.) So the question must be examined, Do books based on dissertations sell worse than other books?

Some publishers believe so, apparently based primarily on what they have heard about the "approval plans" that libraries set up with book distributors. Approval plans allow libraries to specify the kinds of books they want to receive notification about or even have delivered automatically. Distributors allow libraries to include or exclude books according to many parameters, including publisher, subject, whether a book is a textbook, and whether it is based on a dissertation.

The existence of the dissertation parameter has spooked some university press editors and directors, who believe that libraries are increasingly excluding dissertation-based books from their approval plans and doing so "on

grounds they can already get the material through dissertation databases" (Ramirez et al. 2013, 376). Singerman describes the situation even more starkly, saying that the distributor Yankee Book Peddler (now known as YBP Library Services) marks any book it determines to be based on a dissertation as a "do-not-buy title" (cited in Smith-Cruz 2014, clip 5).

However, what these publishers have heard—what they think they know—is wrong. There is little evidence that libraries are increasingly excluding dissertation-based books from approval plans or that the libraries that do exclude such books do so because the original dissertations are available online. And distributors, whose businesses are based on selling books, certainly do not brand dissertation-based books with some kind of fatal do-not-buy stamp.

Michael Zeoli, a vice president at YBP, dispels several myths surrounding approval plans and dissertation-based books. First, "there is no stand-alone term 'dissertation'": YBP's approval plans distinguish between "unrevised dissertations" and "revised dissertations" (Zeoli 2013, para. 4). Admittedly, few libraries purchase unrevised dissertations, but the same is not true for revised dissertations. Zeoli also reports that revised dissertations published by university presses sold almost as well as other university press books. He also found that libraries bought revised dissertations from university presses in considerably larger numbers than revised dissertations from commercial presses, evidence that librarians respect the selection judgments of university presses and value their intensive editorial work. In 2015, Zeoli examined more recent sales figures for university presses and found that revised dissertations were selling, on average, just as well as the presses' other books: "I took the new title output of revised dissertations for 1 year for a dozen U.S. university presses spanning types from high-end prestigious to small presses with a regional focus. Surprisingly, the *average* number of units sold for revised dissertations was identical to the number of titles sold for other titles: 83" (personal communication, September 3, 2015). Not surprisingly, the exact balance between revised dissertations and other books varied by press. Zeoli saw that some presses sold fewer revised dissertations than other books and some sold more. But, "[i]n general, the numbers were fairly close, as the average reveals" (personal communication, September 3, 2015). However, he also learned that, on average, revised dissertations sell less well in the first ninety days after publication. YBP's buyers initially purchase stock for the first ninety days, so they do indeed sometimes tell publishers that revised dissertations sell fewer copies (personal communication, September 3, 2015). Even though these books catch up over time, the phenomenon of the first ninety days may scare publishers.

Zeoli believes that the rise in demand-driven acquisitions (DDA) of e-books is a more significant development to watch and that it affects library sales much more than the accessibility of dissertations: "The real impact on

sales has been the dramatic growth of content flowing into DDA pools in libraries and triggering into a sale at a very low rate (and even then, more often as a loan or rental than as a purchase). The debate over dissertations really doesn't even rise to the level of 'footnote' in terms of impact on publisher sustainability" (personal communication, September 3, 2015). As for the supposed prejudice against revised dissertations in approval plans, Zeoli (2013) dispels that myth too: "Having written many Approval Plans over 15 years, I know that libraries do not punish this category of books anymore [*sic*] than others, at least not when published by university presses" (para. 10). Still, some libraries do exclude both unrevised and revised dissertations from their approval plans; Kevin Smith (2013b) summarizes some of the reasons:

> Many academic libraries, especially at smaller institutions that do not have a mandate to build a research collection, will exclude books based on revised dissertations from their approval plan because such books are likely to be very expensive and very narrowly focused. Many libraries simply cannot put their limited funds toward highly-specialized monographs that will not broadly support a teaching-focused mission. (para. 6)

Of course, libraries do not acquire books exclusively through approval plans. Individual librarians also select individual titles, making decisions based on their libraries' collection priorities and researcher populations. Smith (2013b) also addresses the question of whether librarians do what some publishers fear and discriminate against dissertation-based books for which the dissertation is available online:

> In 25 years as an academic librarian, I have never met a librarian who looks for an online version of a dissertation before buying the published, and presumably heavily revised, monograph based on that dissertation. That is just not part of the process; most acquisitions librarians do not even know if there is an online version of the dissertation when they decide about purchasing the monograph; I certainly did not when I made these sorts of decisions. Libraries look for well-reviewed items that fit the curricular needs of their campus. They may ask if the book is over-priced and/or too narrowly focused, and those questions may rule out many revised dissertations these days. But they simply do not, based on my experience and discussions with many of my colleagues (more anecdotal evidence!), look to see if they can get an unrevised version for free. (para. 5)

As Smith acknowledges, his reporting is based on anecdote, not data. But there are many others who support his claims. See, for example, Leonard Cassuto's (2011) informal survey investigating the related question of whether acquisitions librarians discriminate against dissertation-based books whose authors have previously published dissertation findings or excerpts in

journals. Spoiler: They don't (para. 11). Librarians know that, given the choice, scholars at all levels prefer to interact with and refer to a published work, not its precursor dissertation, in scholarly conversation. So, if a university press book is well reviewed, then librarians will consider its relevance to their institution's researchers and its affordability without a negative thought about its possible origins as a dissertation.

Nevertheless, sales of university press books have declined precipitously since the 1970s. According to Singerman, "every time you thought it couldn't go lower from where it was, it would go lower." But the decline, according even to Singerman, is due to steeply increasing serials prices and libraries' correspondingly smaller monograph budgets (cited in Smith-Cruz 2014, clip 5). Or, as Kevin Smith (2013a) writes in response to Charles Backus, "Your lunch, Mr. Backus, is being eaten by Elsevier and Wiley, not by ETDs" (para. 6).

As discussed in the previous section, publishers who are wary of OA dissertations are outnumbered by those who are unfazed by them or see them as tools for finding good manuscripts. But it goes further: Some publishers actually favor OA dissertations that have attracted attention online. They interpret buzz surrounding an online dissertation as evidence that there is a market for a book and do not worry about the dissertation potentially pulling buyers away from the book. According to Jim McCoy, director of the University of Iowa Press, "[a]ny dissertation that's on the Internet and has taken on a life of its own, that would be a selling point to me" (cited in Howard 2011, para. 19). Sara Pritchard, formerly of West Virginia University Press, has a similar view, saying of a dissertation-based book on mountaintop-removal coal mining, "We thought it was a good sign that her electronic dissertation was receiving so many hits . . . and that it boded well for sales of her book," which has indeed sold "extremely well" (cited in Howard 2011, para. 20). Granted, publishers will always favor manuscripts on controversial issues, such as mountaintop-removal coal mining, and popular topics, such as the Civil War, because they attract interest beyond the academy (Ramirez et al. 2013). Of course, as pointed out by Harvard University Press (2013), the "proper role of market viability in scholarly publishing" is an "unsettled matter" (para. 7). But that is a discussion for a different venue.

Clearly, anxieties about the effect of OA dissertations on the sales of resulting books have been driven by rumors and accumulated distortions, not actual information about approval plans and library acquisitions. Somehow, almost as in the children's game "Telephone," the existence of dissertation parameters in approval plans turned into a rumor that YBP marks dissertation-based books with a do-not-buy flag and a belief that books based on OA dissertations sell especially poorly. In order to ameliorate this mass misunderstanding and prevent future ones, we must all heed this plea from Cassuto (2011): "If I may presume to advise publishers and librarians, let me

ask you to talk to each other. Keep each other informed so that your policies are based on fact, not fear" (para. 23). We must also continue to study the trends and analyze data, not just anecdotes. Without that data, we will, as Rick Anderson (2013) puts it, "continue operating in the realm of inference, anecdote, and fear—none of which generally provides a solid basis for policy" (para. 10).

ANXIETIES ABOUT MISDEEDS

Another fear among dissertation writers and advisors, especially those unfamiliar with OA in general, is that OA dissertations will attract plagiarists, swindlers, and other no-goodniks of the scholarly world. When considering these concerns, we must recall that, before the Internet, interlibrary loan (ILL) and microformats were regarded with the same wariness. As Andrew H. Horn wrote in 1952, the "thing [the graduate student] demands of the university archivist is a promise that his brain child will not be turned over to the library for promiscuous interlibrary lending, lest some literary pirate steal his stuff before he gets it in print himself" (328).

Concerns about ILL-enabled misdeeds were not allowed to interfere with libraries' mandate to collect, preserve, and provide access to dissertations— to the great benefit of today's researchers, whose work requires access to many sources, including the dissertations of earlier generations. Similarly, moral panic about OA-enabled misdeeds cannot be allowed to prevent the collection, preservation, and provision of access to today's dissertations or the modernization and improvement of techniques for accomplishing these tasks (e.g., online submission, digital preservation, and OA distribution). Nevertheless, let us examine the concerns about OA and the scholarly offenses it supposedly encourages: plagiarism, idea theft, and copyright violations, including repackaging for profit.

Without question, texts that are freely available online are easy to plagiarize. And if they are well researched and well written, as dissertations generally are, they are likely to appeal to a would-be plagiarist. However, if the text is online, then it is also easy to identify as the source material of a plagiarized work. As many professors attest, plagiarized papers are often easy to spot; they tend to be marked by patchiness, including sudden changes in style, tense, and even formatting. Once a paper has raised suspicions, a quick Internet search for some fishy phrases often reveals the source—but only if the source is online. So, while openness may make plagiarism easier to commit, it also makes plagiarism easier to detect.

Of course, most dissertation writers are less concerned about plagiarism by students than plagiarism by unscrupulous scholars in their field. These supposed scholars are often craftier plagiarists, more likely to blend in the

stolen bits and make a seemingly unified whole. As a result, their creations set off fewer alarms than sloppily plagiarized student papers. But they are still sniffed out, often because another researcher in the field, sometimes the author of the source, recognizes stolen arguments or language (e.g., Sonfield 2014). And, as with student papers, Internet searching can reveal the malfeasance, provided the source is also online.

Because openness is so useful in rooting out plagiarism, it can even provide a deterrent against it. As leading OA expert Peter Suber (2012) puts it, "[n]ot all plagiarists are smart, but the smart ones will not steal from OA sources indexed in every search engine. In this sense, OA deters plagiarism" (24). Furthermore, in cases of authors accusing each other of plagiarism, an online time stamp can serve as arbiter. In fact, a time stamp helped one of the authors of this chapter make a successful case against a researcher who had plagiarized her master's thesis in large quantities. After reporting the plagiarism, she was asked to prove that this person had plagiarized her, not vice versa. To do so, she simply showed that her thesis had been posted online long before the other work was submitted for evaluation. With the question of priority addressed, the investigation continued and found the accused guilty of extensive plagiarism from multiple sources.

Similar to the fear of plagiarism is the fear of idea theft—having ideas from one's dissertation found, stolen, and published by someone else before the dissertation can be turned into an article or book. But the surest way to prevent someone else from taking credit for an idea—either because that person stole the idea or because that person had the idea independently—is to make the idea public as soon as possible, to establish priority (Harnad 2006). If the original work is OA, then someone might try to take credit for its ideas, but the time-stamped original can disprove the appropriator's claims.

Still, some argue that secrecy, which would make appropriation impossible, is preferable to time-stamped sharing. However, total secrecy of doctoral research is rare. For example, many graduate students present their findings at symposia and conferences, and unprincipled academic supervisors, who of course have privileged access to their students' unpublished work, sometimes claim credit for such work (Martin 2013).

Others worry that crooked publishers will "steal" OA dissertations and sell them for profit (Hawkins, Kimball, and Ives 2013, 36). This fear seems to be unfounded, a conflation of two other phenomena: (1) the existence of shady book publishers that sell compilations of OA articles originally published under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license, which allows commercial reuse (Anderson 2015), and (2) ProQuest's now-discontinued practice of selling dissertations through "third-party retailers," such as Amazon (Straumsheim 2014). The first should not concern dissertation authors, almost none of whom give their dissertations a CC BY license. Unless a publisher is willing to commit flagrant copyright violations, it will not re-

package works that are traditionally copyrighted or released under licenses with noncommercial clauses. And the second is neither an OA issue per se nor any longer an issue at all, only a lingering resentment (see "Anxiety about Corporate Collusion," later).

Graduates are more likely to be tricked by e-mail enticements from publishers that sell unedited dissertations (Stromberg 2014). When dissertation authors transfer copyright to such publishers, they relinquish almost all rights to the work, including the right to make derivative works. It is important to note the great distance between what these publishers do and what universities with OA dissertation policies do. Despite alarmist claims that universities require students to "forfeit their intellectual property rights" (Hawkins, Kimball, and Ives 2013, 32), they do no such thing. Rather, universities leave copyright with the author, only requiring a nonexclusive license to distribute the work noncommercially (see Duke University Graduate School n.d.). The rampant confusion on this point highlights the need for rights education by universities, libraries, and publishers.

Of course, those who choose to restrict access to their dissertations are hiding them not just from bad attention but also from good attention. If a dissertation is not OA, then it is much less likely to be read by those who might provide useful feedback, offer career-boosting opportunities, cite it in their publications, bolster the author's scholarly confidence, or silently appreciate the work.

Rebecca Anne Goetz (2013) is just one scholar who found a publisher because her dissertation was OA: "I ended up submitting my manuscript to [Johns Hopkins University] Press *after* American history editor Bob Brugger had read the dissertation and sought me out at a conference to talk about it" (para. 7). And her testimonial about OA goes beyond the benefits it brought her: "As scholars we are supposed to speak to one another, and our written work is supposed to start conversations. Embargoing prevents good conversations from ever getting started" (para. 8).

Download counts do not qualify as conversation, but they do communicate valuable information to authors. Take, for example, Gregory T. Donovan, who not only posted his dissertation online but also used the website's URL as his dissertation title (MyDigitalFootprint.org) to make sure that anyone who saw or heard mention of his dissertation would immediately understand how to access it. In 2013, he reported that his site had had more than three thousand unique visits in the previous year, with more than five hundred PDF downloads. Of course, he did not communicate directly with most of the downloaders, but the numbers nevertheless demonstrated to him "some kind of interest, which just at a personal level motivates me to continue this work, know that there's an audience out there, and know that my scholarship is getting some kind of traction" (cited in Smith-Cruz 2014, clip 6).

Let us close this examination of fear-based opposition to OA with some provocative words from Denise Troll Covey's (2013) compelling article "Opening the Dissertation: Overcoming Cultural Calcification and Agoraphobia." She denounces those who restrict their dissertations out of fear of misuse, saying, "They are hoarders and censors who undermine the values and mission of the university, upset the balance between private interest and public good that copyright was designed to achieve, and impair the online identity critical to their future employment" (551). She argues that those who restrict access and those who advise them to do so are "not good stewards of their discipline" (Covey 2013, 551).

Indeed, stewards bear responsibility for the renovation of their disciplines. Of course, many would counter that scholars have a greater responsibility to themselves than to their disciplines. But even if so, it is not at all clear that they serve themselves well by embargoing their dissertations. Yes, there are some risks in releasing one's dissertation or any other publication to the public. But there are greater risks and lost opportunity costs in hiding it.

ANXIETY ABOUT JUVENILIA

Emotionally exhausted and intellectually insecure at the end of the defense ordeal, some graduate students seek to hide their dissertation from further scrutiny, not wanting to reveal their work until they have transformed it into a more perfect, mature text. Fears that graduate work "isn't ready" for larger audiences reflect a mighty and common fear of being judged on work that is underdeveloped, underreviewed, and undertested.

However, the Association of College & Research Libraries' "Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education" (2015) highlights that scholarship is an ongoing, unfinished conversation. Scholarship takes place in different venues and consists of a continuum of intellectual iterations, reviews, and revisions. The dissertation is a well-defined venue for the early work of junior scholars, the first iteration of scholarship that may later be revised for a polished appearance in long format. Differences between unrevised and revised scholarly iterations and the venues that contain them are understood by participants in the conversation. Authors fearing exposure of their graduate work not only misjudge their audiences' expectations but also underestimate their readers' competencies.

The dissertation is the culmination of graduate study proposed, constructed, approved, and defended in relationship with a committee of faculty advisors, but it is not selected, shaped, or edited with any audience in mind except the degree-granting institution. Academic press titles are, on the whole, thoroughly transformed, rewritten, and improved from the standard six-chapter dissertation of their inception.

Nevertheless, new academic authors often conflate expectations for the dissertation with those for the book. University of Alabama religious studies professor Michael J. Altman (2013) blogged about why he embargoed his dissertation:

> I have a book project that I'm working on and it is based on my dissertation. The dissertation is a really good dissertation . . . but it isn't as good as the book will be. It doesn't have the kind of sharp teeth I want the final book to have. It was written for an audience of three, not an entire field. And even though I was told to "write for the book" by my advisor, it is still the rough draft of the book. It is a . . . fine dissertation, but it is not my first book. (para. 7)

If the dissertation were truly embraced as a requirement for a degree, as a step in a public scholarly conversation, and not held to the fantastically aspirational standard of publisher-ready copy, then this dilemma would not present itself. Advisors offering dissertation authors encouragement to "write for the book" would do them a greater service by presenting it as advice intended to elicit a reader-friendly style of writing or creativity of argument. Advisory encouragement should constitute a guideline or a challenge to the dissertation author, not a blurred expectation that advisory committees assume the same standards and purposes as academic book publishers.

ANXIETY ABOUT ANYTHING ONLINE

Leonard Cassuto (2011) offers the following as a supposed distillation of the sentiments of editors, or at least the editors he talks to: "Don't make your dissertation available online. Book editors seem unanimous on that point for obvious reasons. Many university libraries routinely add dissertations to their electronic holdings. If yours does, then opt out. If your thesis is already online, then have it taken down" (para. 11).

Of course, *online* could mean many different things. It could describe a dissertation that is immediately posted OA or one that is online in an OA repository but temporarily embargoed or one that is online but available only via ProQuest's subscription database or sales site or one that is submitted to ProQuest but embargoed forever. Are all these varieties of online distribution obviously and equally threatening to all university press editors? Survey evidence and anecdotal reporting both suggest that online distribution does not in itself worry publishers. But OA distribution makes some vocal publishers, often small ones in specialized fields, nervous to varying degrees (Ramirez et al. 2013).

With university press sales on a downward trend for decades and with small presses with small print runs operating on slimmer and slimmer margins, OA dissertations are new complications. But they are not necessarily

threats for unstable small businesses. As mentioned earlier, publishers can use download metrics for an OA dissertation to gauge reader interest in the work. In OA repositories, publishers have new tools to establish which works have ready audiences and to identify where on the globe those readers reside. Furthermore, studies indicate that offering a book in full-text downloadable form openly and online does not necessarily cut into print-copy sales (McGreal and Chen 2011). Readers prefer to read long-form writing in hard copy, but online will do for chapter reading or if the hard copy is out of reach (JISC Collections 2009).

Demanding that a dissertation be "taken down" altogether from a university's repository of record is often incompatible with university policies that require dissertations to be available for public review. Advocating that universities remove dissertations from any and all online platforms, presumably with a reversion to paper- and microfilm-based storage and distribution, is advocating for a refusal to modernize. Disengagement from standard forms of scholarly distribution will serve no individual career well. Furthermore, disciplines that fail to embrace new technologies and new methods of scholarly communication imperil their own viability.

Cassuto's distilled warning was cited and promulgated by well-known academic advisor Kathryn Hume (2011), who cautions, in blogger boldface, that "[w]ithout the quality control implied by refereeing, ProQuest 'publication' will not count for tenure. Furthermore, its being there may interfere with your landing a revised version at a reputable press. You could ruin your chances of getting tenure if your thesis is freely available" (para. 2). Now, ProQuest work is actually quite rarely "freely available." Both Cassuto's and Hume's warnings involve a lack of specificity, a sort of fuzzy fear, about the varieties and options of online dissertations that haunt and hype these conversations.

Hume, like Cassuto, fails to distinguish effectively either between ProQuest and OA repository platforms or among the different public access and embargo options that both routinely offer. While ProQuest offers authors (particularly those without an institutional repository) an option to make their dissertations OA for a fee, ProQuest's primary distribution model is subscription- and sales-based. ProQuest's for-profit distribution model hews closely to the company's tradition of print and microfilm distribution.

Producing graduate work that is archived and publicly accessible is a requirement for the PhD. It is not an established threat to publishers or a strike against a productive career. Faculty advisors, especially those who publish their advice, do student authors a disservice by discussing dissertation distribution options without a complete and reliable grasp of the conditions about which they are advising. Advisors recommending takedown to prevent ruinous consequences might better influence students' careers and the future of their disciplines by accurately representing academic publish-

ers' varying opinions about OA dissertations and the roots of their anxieties. They might help student authors to carefully consider online dissertation discovery mechanisms and embargo options and walk them through the consequences of both obscurity and exposure, informed by their knowledge of how publishing, hiring, and promotion works in their disciplines. They could more productively identify the particular publishers who will not consider proposals based on dissertations or unembargoed dissertations instead of painting the entire academic publishing enterprise as antidissertation and anti-OA.

The confusion about posting dissertations online is not solely the result of publisher-inspired advisor fear and misunderstanding. A great deal of OA anxiety is generated by the liberal use of the word *publish* and its attendant (mis)understandings. Hume (2011), again conflating ProQuest with OA, here concerns herself with the notion of publishing: "Once available through any form of open access, be it ProQuest or a university library's public access materials, that dissertation is functionally published" (para. 2). The word *publishing* is commonly used to describe posting to ProQuest or an institutional repository. However, works on these platforms are not "published" in the fullest sense of the word. Dissertations are reviewed by a committee of advisors, and they are formatted and copyedited to a small degree. But they are not curated by a publishing house or evaluated by reviewers unknown to the author.

Also, it is important for new academic authors and their advisors not to conflate copyright concepts with publishing concepts. Traditional academic publishers generally require authors to transfer copyright in their works to them and with it the exclusive license to distribute the work. ProQuest and universities with OA repositories, on the other hand, leave copyright with authors. Both of the latter require a nonexclusive license to archive and distribute the work in perpetuity, but neither demands that authors hand over copyright. Nonexclusive licenses do not prevent a dissertation author from repurposing a work, transferring the copyright to another party, or modifying it and publishing again.

University instructions for submitting graduate work online can further muddle understandings about online platforms and their distribution options. Most North American universities require graduate authors to submit dissertations to ProQuest for the distribution, reproduction, and preservation services they provide.[4] Some require deposit to both ProQuest and an institutional repository, but many of those institutions have devised workflows that allow authors to submit their works online only once through one interface. Staff then copy and transfer the works and associated metadata to the other platform. These procedures are designed to save authors time and effort, but they can also generate further confusion.

For example, at the CUNY Graduate Center, authors are required to deposit in ProQuest, where they specify two sets of embargo options—one for ProQuest and the other for the CUNY institutional repository. Some authors choose to embargo differently for each platform, reflecting their differing preferences for commercial and OA distribution of their work. However, using ProQuest's interface alone for collecting author decisions about two significantly different platforms has led to author uncertainty about embargo and OA conditions for both platforms.

ANXIETY ABOUT CORPORATE COLLUSION

ProQuest's third-party retailer option, begun in 2010 and ended in 2014, confounded a significant number of authors and faculty advisors (Straumsheim 2014). While the option was in effect, authors were offered the chance to accept or decline increased exposure and possible sale, for royalties, of their work on such retailer websites as Amazon. ProQuest also asked (and continues to ask) authors whether they wanted their work to be discoverable by third-party search engines (ProQuest 2015). With third-party retailers frequently discoverable by third-party search engines, student authors were left confused about the resale and discovery factors at play.

Authors who unwittingly allowed third-party sales could ask ProQuest to remove the listing, but removal was usually not immediate due to the lingering discoverable caches of the systems involved. The horror of discovery that ProQuest-deposited dissertations were for sale on Amazon quickly turned to outrage at presumed profit-mongering by two giant corporations. Though ProQuest and Amazon did not attempt to boost sales of dissertations at the expense of author choice, mistrust lingers among authors and advisors, who are uncertain about ProQuest's distribution patterns.

While the real lesson of the third-party retailer option is that authors do not always understand or anticipate the consequences of their choices in this complex and evolving realm, objections to mandatory ProQuest deposit reflect concerns about the potential for author exploitation and loss of author control (Clement 2013). Author choice is at the center of arguments against university mandates for deposit in ProQuest. Jesse Stommel (2015), assistant professor of digital humanities at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, writes,

> Students shouldn't be required by supposedly nonprofit educational institutions to publish their theses or dissertations on corporate platforms like ProQuest. They shouldn't be forced to upload their intellectual property to profit-driven and often predatory sites like Turnitin. Students need to be . . . allowed to make critical decisions about what happens to their work and where it will live. (para. 8)

ProQuest assures authors and ETD administrators that the use of work shared with ProQuest is determined exclusively by authors. Universities may not always make all options and the string of implications that follow from them crystal clear to all authors, but authors can contact ProQuest any time after submission to request or extend an embargo, which makes a dissertation inaccessible to visitors to the ProQuest dissertation database and sales site. ProQuest allows embargoes for any length of time, even unlimited, offering more flexibility than many universities, which often limit authors to two-year repository embargoes, sometimes renewable and sometimes not. Still, students at ProQuest-mandating universities are not afforded the essential choice of whether to license their work to ProQuest in the first place.

ProQuest's long-standing preservation practices are valued by many— ProQuest is the preservation platform contracted by the Library of Congress for copies of record. And ProQuest shares dissertation metadata with more than thirty subject indexes, allowing graduate work to appear in the MLA Bibliography, SciFinder, Sociological Abstracts, ERIC, PsycINFO, and others, thus raising the profile of graduate work for researchers using these traditional library tools (ProQuest n.d., "ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Dissemination," para. 3). ProQuest advertises, "In disciplines where journals are not the primary form of scholarly communication, dissertations offer access to significant primary research that is not published in any other format and they surface seminal ideas from notable scholars" (ProQuest n.d., "ProQuest Dissertation & Theses Global"). ProQuest's long-lived practice of sharing metadata with discipline-based indexes in order to "surface seminal ideas" and often, in turn, to link directly to ProQuest's subscription-based dissertation database seems not to agitate those who worry about the sales of dissertation-based books, even though users of library indexes and databases are a primary market for those books. Links from popular search engines, such as Google Scholar, directly to OA dissertations seem to cause more consternation than ready availability to academic audiences through Pro-Quest's dissertation database. This incongruity in reasoning is difficult to thoroughly explain, but it may be chalked up to anxieties about new forms of openness in previously closed commercial systems of academic distribution.

Authors like Stommel also object to ProQuest's practice of sharing dissertations with the subscription-based antiplagiarism database Turnitin, referred to by its parent organization iParadigms on the ProQuest submission site (ProQuest allows authors to retract their dissertations after they have been shared with iParadigms, and dissertations embargoed in ProQuest are never shared with any entity). Of course, Turnitin can also mine OA items for inclusion in its bank of texts for plagiarism detection, so ProQuest's contribution of texts to Turnitin only complements what is already available to Turnitin on the open web. Nevertheless, for authors concerned about Pro-

Quest's commercial applications of graduate work, ProQuest's partnership with iParadigms taps anxieties about corporate chicanery.

ANXIETY'S WELLSPRING

As awareness increases about the unsustainability of the academic publishing industry and about the shifts in the technologies of scholarly research and production, so do anxiety and speculation about them. Covey (2013) cites communications scholars Walter J. Ong and James J. O'Donnell, who usefully address previous and current shifts in "technologies of the word" (545). Ong (1977) writes that the "technologies of writing and print and electronic devices radically transform the word and the mental processes" (339). It is the technologically driven shift in these mental processes and the accompanying changes in research and production practices that give rise to anxiety among scholars and publishers trained in print-based systems of research and production. Kathleen Fitzpatrick (2011) follows Ong's observations by exploring claims about the obsolescence of literary forms (e.g., the novel) to find that they indicate more about the anxieties of the claimants, practitioners of print working in an electronic age, than they do about the objects of the claim. Scholars' defensiveness about perceived threats to traditional practice and formats, she argues, works to "re-create an elite cadre of cultural producers and consumers . . . profiting from their claims of marginality by creating a sense that their values, once part of a utopian mainstream and now apparently waning, must be protected" (Fitzpatrick 2011, 2).

Publishers' fears about the unsustainability of their business model and academics' anxieties about shifting research methods, new varieties of scholarly production, more open formats for public scholarship, and ultimately the new skills required for academic success that senior scholars often do not possess lie at the root of anxiety about OA dissertations. Anecdote is the coin of the realm in this anxiety-laden academic conversation. The few survey-based studies of publishers' practices indicate that OA dissertations revised and repackaged appeal to the majority of university presses, with quality and audience being the most important factors. Informed exploration of publisher practices and attitudes, as well as longitudinal data about book contracts and sales, would move the conversation to a more sophisticated level beyond what anecdote can convey.

Anxieties about scholarly production are on display in other academic venues as well—for example, in reaction to new library designs that reduce the prominence of books and secluded individual study spaces within the scene of scholarly production. Designs to accommodate and incorporate new scholarly practices, such as more frequent use of electronic texts and collaborative work spaces, can be construed as threats to the preeminence of tradi-

tional scholarly practice—that is, book-based research and single-author, long-form writing (Morris 2012). Will the academy's conservatism stifle innovation in form and method, or will new sensibilities coalesce to encourage invention and variety?

It is this same, anxious group of scholars, steeped in the traditions of print production, who must embrace the changes that worry them. Open access dissertation distribution is a basic element in a cluster of technology-driven scholarly practices waiting to get a foothold. Reflecting her own anxiety that the academy will not reform quickly enough to maintain relevance, Covey (2013) urges, "Only opening other dimensions of the dissertation—the structure, media, notion of authorship, and methods of assessment—can foster the digital literacy needed to save PhD programs from extinction" (543).

Though Covey's anxieties about the extinction of the doctoral degree may appear to be premature or overwrought, she points to crucial issues that must be resolved to stabilize the future for new scholars. If fewer and fewer dissertations become books, will academic review continue to include one- or two-book standards for promotion and tenure? Will the scholarly monograph continue to be the gold standard for academic success? Will solitary authorship of book-length texts continue to be the bread and butter of the humanities and some social sciences? Will biases against open academic production reduce the productivity and relevance of disciplines that are slower to evolve?

Tending libraries and archives is a relentlessly public service. Librarians and archivists seek to engage our constituencies broadly, to share our collective culture deeply. How else but through active, open engagement with our publics, through forthright circulation of our collections, can we excite scholarly conversation and inspire creation of new works? There is no other way we know. Open access advocacy for dissertations and other works does not derive from some ideological fervor alien to librarianship. Rather, it stems from the central and very traditional values of archiving and librarianship, from our professional obligation to provide meaningful access to the world's culture for the people of the world. Supporting open access, the most democratic method of sharing technologically possible in our time, is hardly a radical gesture. It is a librarian's fundamental responsibility.

NOTES

1. This chapter focuses on doctoral dissertations, but much of what is discussed applies to master's theses as well.

2. In addition to the anxieties described in this chapter, there is a looming suspicion about institutions' motives for encouraging or requiring OA dissertations. Some scholars have noticed that OA advocates sometimes refer to theses and dissertations as "low-hanging fruit" for building institutional repositories (Hawkins, Kimball, and Ives 2013; Stone, Comstock, and Glavash 2006). And, indeed, that phrase suggests that the push for openness is more about

boosting repository numbers than about serving scholars and scholarly communication. OA advocates are well advised to refrain from referring to any scholar's arduously produced work as "low-hanging fruit."

  3. Admittedly, the situation is different in creative writing. Unlike most academic researchers, many creative writers earn their livelihoods, or at least supplement their incomes, by selling their works to publishers. However, publishers of creative writing generally require authors to give them first publishing rights. If a work has already been published online, then a publisher cannot be given first rights. (For more information, see Association of Writers & Writing Programs n.d.; Kaufka and Bryan 2007; Thomas and Shirkey 2013.)

  4. There is a growing number of institutions that offer students a choice to deposit with ProQuest or not. These ProQuest-optional institutions include several high-profile universities, among them MIT, Stanford University, Brown University, Johns Hopkins University, and University of Texas at Austin (Clement n.d.).

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