

CASE STUDY: PROQUEST DISSERTATIONS & THESES DATABASE

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

ProQuest®



Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) was founded in 1869 and is one of Illinois' most comprehensive public universities. The school has 11 colleges, including a School of Law, a School of Medicine and a Graduate School. Major subject areas studied include Anthropology, Business, Computer Science, Engineering, Sciences (Chemistry, Geosciences, Molecular Biology, Microbiology and Biochemistry, Physics, Plant Biology, Zoology) and Psychology.

Each year the university welcomes thousands of students from all over the world as they pursue associate, bachelor's, master's, doctoral and professional degrees. And with over 70 master's degree and 31 PhD programs available, research output is significant; in fact SIUC is ranked among the top five percent of all U.S. Institutions for Research by the Carnegie Foundation. It is also ranked one of the best Graduate Schools by U.S. News and World Report. "One of our biggest challenges this year," commented Ratna Sinha, Director of Graduate Services, SIUC, "is to increase graduate enrolment. This will lead to greater numbers of dissertations and theses being produced in the future, so it's imperative that we have robust systems in place now to handle submissions, reviewing and publication of these works."

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Dr. Ratna Sinha, Director of Graduate Services,
Southern Illinois University Carbondale

In 2005, SIUC decided to participate in ProQuest's dissertations publishing program. "You can imagine the numbers of papers our institution handles," said Dr. Sinha. "To make things as simple as possible for our staff and students, we decided to look at ProQuest's online dissertation publishing tool, the ETD Administrator." The ETD Administrator (electronic theses and dissertations) blends modern technology with an easy-to-use interface which provides a submissions and approval process that is convenient for students and administrators alike. As Dr. Sinha continued, "In the eight years we've participated in the program, I can honestly say we have not had a single complaint about using the system!"

The tool moves all of the steps involved in publishing dissertations and theses online, eliminating the need to box and ship paper copies. Institutions that partner with ProQuest are assigned a unique ETD Administrator for their students that guides them through the process of uploading their work and all other relevant information. When each submission is complete, the system alerts the institution's designated administrator who can then review the submission before it is sent to ProQuest.

As well as its ease of use, the ETD Administrator provides a streamlined workflow for submitting dissertations and theses. "The submission process is very economical. SIUC students are located around the world and they can use this tool to submit their work at anytime, from anywhere. Similarly, reviewers can review papers at their own convenience. And because the system is online, there are no instances of papers getting "lost" in the overall reviewing / checking / publishing process either!"

Since 1938, ProQuest has been archiving, publishing and disseminating dissertations and theses. It is the largest and oldest archive of scholarship and is designated as an official, off-site repository of the U.S. Library of Congress. "Preservation of scholarship is extremely important," agreed Dr. Sinha, "and timely access to research even more so. Our decision to partner with ProQuest was influenced by the ability for our research to be shared with peer institutions around the world. We wanted to put our institution on the map; and through ProQuest, we are able to achieve this."

As well as meeting the institution's need to preserve scholarship, other key factors that underpin the successful relationship with SIUC are ProQuest's customer service and technical support. "ProQuest has always provided excellent service and Marlene Cole is excellent! I can approach her anytime with any issue or query, and she will do her best to come up with a solution to our satisfaction. I still find it hard to believe that some institutions are using the old fashioned paper copies of dissertations. There really is no excuse of not going with ProQuest. It is free to use, the technical support service is excellent and for those institutions with limited resources, ProQuest is the way to go. I hope they keep up the good work!"

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