

An integrated approach to preparing, publishing, presenting and preserving theses

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Abstract

This paper describes progress made on a project funded by the Australian government to create Free software; the Integrated Content Environment for research and scholarship (ICE-RS). ICE-RS is a multi-faceted project which will add value to finished theses by making them available in both HTML and PDF, as well as providing a mechanism for packaging multimedia theses. The project will also concentrate on providing services for thesis production, with version control, automated backup and collaboration services.

The paper begins with the established content management system that is the basis for the project, ICE, originally developed to create courseware packages. ICE includes distributed, version controlled collaboration, using word processing software and works on multiple platforms, with standard document formats. We survey other approaches to content authoring and publishing for ETDs.

We showcase exploratory work on integration of the thesis writing process with Institutional Repository software including publishing theses in both PDF and HTML with preservation and descriptive metadata. The presentation will include demonstrations of thesis production at all stages of development from proposal to completion.

In a more speculative vein, we will discuss opportunities for institutions to provide new levels of support for candidates via automated thesis “dashboard” progress reports, supervisor and examiner annotation and comment and support for copyright considerations as early as possible in the process.

Introduction

This paper describes progress made on a project funded by the Australian government to create a free (as in open source) software application and associated documentation. The project is known as the *Integrated Content Environment for research and scholarship* or ICE-RS. The project is tasked with creating and/or documenting software and work practices that allow academics and students writing-up research to create documents, collaborate, manage, publish and deposit their work in repositories. An overview of the project, derived from the successful proposal document is available on the ICE website (Sefton 2006b).

ICE-RS is supported by the Systemic Infrastructure Initiative as part of the Australian Commonwealth Government's Backing Australia's Ability – An Innovative Action Plan for the Future (<http://backingaus.innovation.gov.au>).

The project proposal describes the key aim; to provide more flexible content than having all documents delivered in PDF (Adobe 2007) while also making the written dimension of scholarship more efficient and the result more sustainable:

In the institutional repository world, the Adobe PDF format is currently the expected norm for document delivery.