

Embargoes on bits of theses: skating on thin ICE?

I gave myself a [task](#)* after the last [TheOREM-ICE](#) teleconference to look into how ICE might be used for fine-grained thesis embargoes.

I have not seen a full spec but I gather from the conversation that sometimes you want to make a thesis available but place some of the data, or maybe a chapter or two under embargo. Jim Downing proposed that a repository would still advertise the [ORE](#) resource map of the thesis on the web but some parts would be unfetchable by anonymous access until the embargo period is expired. Could we use ICE to do that?

Maybe not such a good idea.

I'll talk here about *why* not, and outline some other possibilities. Of course you should be cautious when I start talking like this 'cos based on prior form I'm probably really just trying to get money to start a new software development or integration project.

For a start embargoes are really quite different from the sorts of access you want in an authoring system, being time based for a start and they have to work on the wide web rather than the intranet and this stuff happens when the thesis finished, so it really should be out of the document authoring system at that point.

ICE is designed for document authoring and collaboration and only has fairly broad-brush access control. In the courseware we work with access is by a whole team to a whole course. For a thesis it is similarly simple, you have the ability to add stuff and your supervisor can comment. I'm not at all sure that it would make sense to add complex document-level access features to ICE, instead why not concentrate on the ICE templates and conversation system? That is the bit we do better than anyone else that I know of. We could integrate the templates into other systems and leave the business of writing content or document management systems to all the other contenders. (One reason why not is that many CMSs are pretty hopeless at managing multiple renditions of the same content and don't have plug-in convertors but there must be at least some we could work with.)

I'm not at all sure that ICE itself should be pushed too much further into thesis management past the authoring stage. It certainly looks like it would be good for drafting a thesis and getting your supervisor to comment, and it's definitely on the cutting edge of being able to mashup document content with data visualization, but we don't have all the elaborate approval and review steps that you'd need for the internal and external processes that follow. One promising lead springs from the way that the Maths & Computing department here at USQ use the [Open Journal Systems](#) (OJS) to manage theses. We're [exploring the idea of an ICE/OJS mashup](#). Stay tuned for a report from the [APSR Open Access Publishing Workshop](#) later this week where I will put this idea and many others to the technical stream.

For delivery I think [The Fascinator](#) might be a good way to manage the kind of embargoed access that the TheOREM team have identified as a requirement. ICE could manage the authoring, with examination via something like OJS and then use an ORE resource map to pass the thesis to a departmental or institutional repository running The Fascinator, which IS designed to do access control. It could then re publish the resource map to the world-wide repository grid and manage the embargoes. Either at the examination stage, or at the repository deposit stage the candidate would set up the embargoes, which would need to be kept as metadata against the components of the thesis.

Thinking about this led me to the idea of putting something like The Fascinator on the desktop, letting it find all your stuff, giving you a simple way to organize it into projects, embargo bits of it and so on, and then automate the process of disseminating it to the

*We're doing this project more or less in the open so you can poke around and see what we're up to.

institutional and other places you'd like it go. I'm thinking of something like Picasa (which finds all your pictures on your hard drive no matter how embarrassing or not safe for work they are) and iTunes which [although in my opinion potentially evil](#) has some nice ways of browsing and organizing content, but with a connection to the world wide repository grid. More on this idea soon.