

# Dissertations Unbound: A Case Study for Revitalizing Access

Gary M. Worley, Ph.D.

*Digital Imaging, Information Technology, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University*

## **Abstract**

Universities, even those with active electronic thesis and dissertation projects, often ignore a larger set of research documents housed within their walls, the printed and bound dissertations usually found within the campus Library. For most universities, these bound dissertations constitute the majority of the documents associated with graduate student research. Access to these documents is then divided between the online electronic dissertations and the printed dissertations stored neatly in rows on numerous shelves. This separation for access represents a dichotomy of scale, with an electronic dissertation offering unlimited access by many users at the same time versus the bound dissertations with limited access available to one user at a time. A simple solution is to have the bound dissertations digitized. But, what does this really mean? And, how long does it take at what cost? A primary concern for undertaking such a scanning project centers on the quality of the product versus the cost associated with the production of the digital files. One consideration is to simply outsource the project. This approach however, may result in a compromise of the quality for increased speed in delivery. An alternative approach is campus-based where support is provided and long-term storage/preservation is addressed. This session will explore issues involved with supporting a large-scale dissertation-scanning project, and the production process adopted at Virginia Tech for the file development and storage. The session will also present comparisons of the scanned dissertations formatted for inclusion with the ETD database on our campus.