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To: Chairs, Departments and Graduate Groups

From: Rosemary A. Joyce, Associate Dean of the Graduate Division

Re: **Advising doctoral candidates on dissertation embargoes and eScholarship repository**

As doctoral students prepare to file their dissertations for the upcoming December deadline — for 2013, December 20 — **faculty are encouraged to discuss with their current (and recent) doctoral students issues raised by various forms of Open Access, which affect the availability of dissertations to the public.**

At the time of filing, doctoral candidates make decisions that determine when their dissertation is made available to other scholars. While the dissertation has always been discoverable once entered in the library catalogue, and other scholars have always been able to obtain access to the dissertation through the library, some former and current students have expressed concerns about inclusion of dissertations in eScholarship. While no specific report has been received of an adverse impact on a doctoral graduate (for example, a press declining a contract to publish), concerns raised by students deserve full discussion by those with the most reliable information about disciplinary practices: that is, the faculty in their home programs.

Students should understand clearly the implications of their decision of whether to release their dissertation immediately, to request a two-year embargo, or to request a longer embargo period.

On October 2, 2013, the University Library announced the inclusion of doctoral dissertations (retroactive to 2009) in its eScholarship repository:

<http://blogs.lib.berkeley.edu/scholcomm.php/dissertations-on-escholarship>

This announcement references the long-standing principle that doctoral students have an obligation to share their research with others. The Graduate Division's *Dissertation Filing Guide* begins with this statement of principle and explains how deposit in the library and submission to Proquest achieves this goal:

UC Berkeley's Graduate Council regulations stipulate that you have an obligation to make your research available to other scholars as part of the degree requirement. This is done when the Graduate Division submits your manuscript to the University Library and ProQuest/UMI.
<http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/dissertation-filing/>

The *Dissertation Filing Guide* advises students to consult with faculty in cases where a longer period before release of the dissertation might be desired:

Occasionally, there are circumstances in which you prefer that your dissertation not be published immediately. Such circumstances may include the disclosure of patentable rights in the work before a patent can be granted, similar disclosures detrimental to the rights of the author, or disclosures of facts about persons or institutions before professional ethics would permit.

The Dean of the Graduate Division may permit the dissertation to be held without shelving for a specified and limited period of time. An embargo of up to 2 years can be indicated on the Dissertation Release Form. Embargoes beyond 2 years must be requested under substantiated circumstances of the kind indicated above and with the endorsement of and an explanatory letter from the chair of the dissertation committee. If you need to request that your manuscript be withheld, please consult with the chair of your committee, and have him or her submit a letter requesting this well before you file for your degree. The memo should be addressed to the Associate Dean and sent to Graduate Services: Degrees, 318 Sproul Hall. <http://grad.berkeley.edu/policies/guides/dissertation-filing/>

When doctoral students opt for a longer embargo period at the time of filing, the decision is not revocable (with few exceptions). Doctoral candidates should consider carefully what such a decision means and should review their options long before filing the dissertation. Departments are encouraged to promote discussion based on discipline-specific norms and expectations, considering both the advantages and possible disadvantages for making the dissertation available.

Several advantages of releasing the dissertation immediately — beyond promoting the dissemination of research that is a principle of the doctoral education programs of the university — have been identified in discussions of open access publishing. Making the text available at or near the date of deposit can add protection against plagiarism of the doctoral candidate's work, by ensuring that others will discover the prior publication. Knowledge of the work of younger scholars may be increased by promoting discovery beyond limited professional networks. Citation of the dissertation by others can be offered as evidence of research significance in employment reviews. Research available through searches on the internet can promote contacts that are international in scope and interdisciplinary in reach.

The potential disadvantages of releasing the dissertation at the time of deposit, or after a short embargo, remain anecdotal. An argument has been made, based on surmises about the behavior of presses, that availability of doctoral dissertations in digital repositories could adversely affect book publication. This argument has been contested by many scholarly publishers (see below).

Further resources

The UC Office of Scholarly Communication offers resources for these issues, including when research is federally funded: <http://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/>

In a major study published in July 2013, based on a 2011 survey, only 7% of scholarly presses would refuse to consider a book manuscript because a dissertation was available in a digital repository. However — again reinforcing the need for discipline-specific guidance for students making decisions about sharing their work — publishers in some specific fields indicated they would never consider for book publication a manuscript based on a publically available dissertation. The study found a strong correlation between the size of the university press and willingness to consider manuscripts on a case by case basis, with larger presses indicating they would always review such proposals. In general, university press comments in this study, like those elsewhere, emphasize the fact that the book manuscript is always revised in response to editorial guidance.

<http://crl.acrl.org/content/74/4/368.full.pdf+html>

Harvard University Press has argued for the positive role of digital dissemination in allowing the press to discover worthy manuscripts:

http://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2013/07/cant-find-it-cant-sign-it-on-dissertation-embargoes.html

Johns Hopkins University Press published the reflections of one of its recent authors, whose dissertation being accessible led to her book contract:

<http://jhupressblog.com/2013/08/22/on-dissertations-embargoes-books-and-jobs/>