Decision regarding policy and routines for accessibility levels of published thesis in electronic format in LUP

Minutes of meeting September 22 2012

Steering committee members present:

Stefan Anderberg, vicarious head of the department, LUCSUS (substitute for Lennart Olsson)
Robin Gullstrand, head of the Geolibrary (secretary)
Karin Hall, head of the department, INES
Per Möller, (adjungerad punkt 4).
Mikael Calner, vicarious head of the department, Department of Geology (chairman and substitute for Per Sandgren)

Decision according to item 7 in the minutes

Policy decision regarding levels of accessibility for full text thesis recorded in LUP. The current proposal is accepted with the amendment that while a thesis in electronic format could be subject to an embargo, according to the text in the proposal, a thesis should be made accessible in its physical form according to the principle of public information and privacy laws and accepted practice of Swedish authorities. The concerned institutions and departments should be informed by the steering committee.
Policy and routines for accessibility levels of published thesis in electronic format in LUP

Background

It is becoming more common that thesis reports from Candidate and Masters level are registered and published via the Lund University Publications *LUP* database.

With a growing number of theses available in full text the accessibility is also increasing. However, with growing publicity the need for different stakeholders to control accessibility also increases. One example could be to restrict accessibility to the students’ theses at different levels to protect the student and the results from their research for upcoming publishing.

It could also be students’ origin from politically unstable or totalitarian dictator ruled countries that do not want to see criticism spread to the general public. It could be research sponsored and connected to commercial companies or results that the student and supervisor intends to publish in peer reviewed journals after the thesis has been approved at the department.

As a consequence, there is a need to meet these requirements at the same time as Swedish national policies and laws regarding public information and privacy have to be met. In the laws regarding public information and privacy it is concluded that a document from a Swedish authority in principle is a public document.

This law gives strong support for the principle of public information but at the same time it contains components intended to protect the privacy of the individual and the interests of the individual. Our proposal is an effort to consider both these principles and, to establish that common sense and a minimum of bureaucracy should decide how the students’ theses should be handled.

a) Teacher or supervisor desires to restrict accessibility

Situations may arise when the teacher or supervisor wish to restrict accessibility to a thesis. This could be due to the teacher would like to publish the results in a scientific journal. It could also be that the teacher is connected to a commercial company running a project for which the student’s results are of great importance. Results in the thesis may be considered as confidential for the life span of the project, thus rising reasons for embargoing the publication of the thesis in full text electronically.
Routines

- The thesis is registered in LUP and abstract and a popular science summary and published.
- The printed thesis is not put under embargo and is made available in printed form in the library.
- The full text version of the thesis is uploaded but not published until after a delay that has been agreed on by the supervisor and the student.
- The duration of embargo on the full text version could never be more than one year.
- An extension of the embargo could never be done without a written request directed to the head of department. The embargo could be extended for periods of three months at a time by the head of department. The decision should be registered in the Lund University public recording system. For each three months extension of the embargo, a new written application must be filed.
- The decisions and their registration number should be stored in LUP under the Message tab. The information stored under this tab is not published.

b) Student desires to restrict accessibility

Students from countries with totalitarian regimes may feel a need to protect themselves or relatives from oppression or punishment and thus have a need to not publish their thesis on the Internet.

LUP offers two possibilities apart from the abovementioned time limited embargo, to restrict accessibility to a thesis: 1) the thesis is only accessible on the Lund University Intranet; 2) the thesis is only accessible to the author and staff with administrator level accreditation in LUP, the Reviewers and top level administrators. It is however important to keep in mind that the name of the student, the title of the thesis and the abstract and popular science summary still are generally available and possible to search for in the database. The functionality of LUP do not permit registering a thesis and keeping it completely invisible on the Internet, directly via LUP or from external search engines such as e.g. Google.

Routines

- The thesis is registered in LUP and abstract and a popular science summary and published. Optionally the registration in LUP is done without uploading the abstract and popular science summary – however such extraordinary cases should be approved by the head of department.
- The full text version is uploaded in LUP both made unavailable for everybody except the author and LUP administrators, with no time limit in effect.
- The printed thesis is not put under embargo and is made available in printed form in the library.
- This, highest level of inaccessibility may only be used after written consent from the head of department, and this decision should be registered.
- The decisions and their registration number should be stored in LUP under the *Message tab*. The information stored under this tab is not published.

**Applied for both routines**

The reviewer, librarian is responsible to make sure that the principles of public information is applied as far as possible. If the reviewer finds evidence that the student has tried to limit the principle, the reviewer is obliged to contact the head of department that then implement a decision according to the above proposal.