

RESEARCH GUIDE

Dissertations

George Mason University Libraries

In-depth research projects often require the use of dissertations and theses, which contain original research and include extensive bibliographies. This guide explains the search strategies for researchers who wish to identify and locate dissertations and theses, and also provides suggestions for obtaining copies of these publications.

LOCATING GMU THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

The GMU Libraries Catalog includes doctoral dissertations and master's theses authored by graduates of George Mason University. If you know the individual's name, you can perform a search by author in the online catalog. The bibliographic record for the publication will show its thesis title, year of publication, pagination, etc.

A second method for searching GMU theses and dissertations is to go to the "Guided Search" option, then input **thesis** as the "keyword anywhere" in the top search box, then **George Mason University** as the "keyword anywhere" in the second box, and name of discipline, such as **business**, in the third search box as "keyword anywhere." This will produce a set consisting of just GMU dissertations and theses covering business topics.

Lastly, the GMU Libraries Catalog can also be used to search for dissertations using the "Set Limits" feature. From the main search page, click on "Set Limit", then at the "Location" box, click on "Fenwick Theses" to limit your search to just these documents. This "limit feature" is effective only for Title and Keyword searches.

Fenwick Library maintains two sets of theses and dissertations written by GMU students. A circulating collection, which covers the years 1973-2002, can be found on 2nd Floor, B Wing. Publications from this set can be checked out for the regular loan period, and the arrangement on the shelves is by discipline, year, and author's last name.

A second set of GMU dissertations and theses is maintained by the Special Collections and Archives (SC & A), 2nd Floor, C Wing of Fenwick Library, for use during SC & A

Office Hours. Arrangement of this collection is by year and by author's last name, and limited photocopying is allowed. Visit the Special Collections website online at <http://www.gmu.edu/library/specialcollections> or call (703) 993-2220

LOCATING WRLC DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

The WRLC Online Catalog can also be searched by author's last name to locate dissertations and theses written by graduates of WRLC institutions. A second way to search is from the "Guided Keyword" search screen: input the Keyword **thesis** in the top search box, and then the Keyword of an academic discipline, such as **education** in the next search box which will return a set listing only dissertations and theses. WRLC's policy statement for interlibrary loan states that a "second copy or microfilm of theses and dissertations should be available for loan", so WRLC authorized patrons can submit online requests for these items.

LOCATING DISSERTATIONS AND THESES FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

From the GMU Libraries Homepage (<http://library.gmu.edu>), go to the Alphabetical List of Databases, then click on *Dissertations Abstracts*. This database, produced by First Search, provides indexing of dissertations accepted at U.S., British and Canadian institutions from 1861 to the present; also included are materials from selected European institutions. Descriptive abstracts are provided for dissertations issued since 1980, and abstracts are also included for theses issued since 1988. Updated monthly, this database has over 1.5 million records, and can be searched by keyword, author, publication year, degree type, language and institution.

OBTAINING COPIES OF DISSERTATIONS

There are several options for obtaining copies of dissertations and theses which the researcher has identified.

- GMU Libraries Interlibrary Loan Department

<http://library.gmu.edu/services/ill.html>

GMU students, faculty and staff may place an online electronic request for a dissertation or thesis through the Document Acquisition and Delivery Department on the webpage shown above. However, lending libraries often will not loan out copies of dissertations and theses through interlibrary loan (I.L.L.) due to their unique nature. Other considerations, such as processing time of the request, and short loan periods, may cause many researchers to go on to the next option.

- Purchase Option

Researchers can call Dissertation Hotline at 1-800-521-3042 to order the full-text of the dissertation or thesis, delivered direct. Prices will vary, based on format

(hardcover, softcover, unbound, microform, etc.) but do include the shipping and handling fees. Over a million of the indexed titles in *Dissertation Abstracts* can be ordered this way.

Also see the "Proquest Information and Learning Dissertation Services" website:
<http://tls.il.proquest.com/hp/Support/DServices>

➤ **Library of Congress**

The Library of Congress Reading Rooms are open to researchers who report to the Reader Registration Station, Room LM140 of the James Madison Building, 101 Independence Ave., Washington, DC.

Those who do so, and obtain a Reader ID card, can then proceed to the Main Reading Room where *Dissertation Abstracts International* is available three ways: in print, and through the First Search database, and also through an online subscription called *Proquest Digital Dissertations*, offering the full text of many doctoral dissertations written after 1997.

Most of the dissertations listed in these sources are also found in microform in the Library's Microform Reading Room; see their website at:

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/microform>

For more information on the dissertation collections and their availability, see the Library of Congress website at:

<http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/main/infocreas/dissert.html>

LOCATING FOREIGN DISSERTATIONS

Dissertations completed in foreign countries are generally not collected by academic libraries, and only selectively at the Library of Congress. They can therefore be difficult to identify and locate.

The Center for Research Libraries (CRL), of which George Mason University is a member, maintains a Foreign Doctoral Dissertations Database. CRL has more than 750,000 uncataloged foreign doctoral dissertations, which can be searched by keyword, author, title and institution. Information on the depth of their holdings, can be found at the CRL website:

<http://www.crl.uchicago.edu/dbdissertations/search.asp>

Instructions are provided for contacting the Center for Research Libraries, and there is also information on their "Demand Purchase Policy".

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