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ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global

Abstract
ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global is the world’s largest multidisciplinary database for electronic theses and dissertations. The database contains over 5 million citations and 2.7 million full text works. The intuitive platform is specially designed for finding dissertations and theses with search fields for specific institutions, advisors, and subject categories. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global is useful for current graduate students in any discipline to see samples of other dissertations and theses in their field, for researchers to find the most recent research on a particular topic, and for conducting research on theses and dissertations as a genre.

Pricing Options
Pricing for ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global is determined at the institutional level based on the Carnegie Classification and full-time enrollment at the institution. ProQuest offers discounted consortial licensing and other discounts to qualifying institutions. Please contact ProQuest directly for pricing information at your institution.

Product Overview/Description
ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (PQDT) is “the world’s most comprehensive curated collection of multi-disciplinary dissertations and theses from around the world” (ProQuest, n.d.). ProQuest has been distributing dissertations since 1939 and is the official dissertations repository for the Library of Congress. The database contains over 5 million citations and 2.7 million full text works. The database grows by approximately 200,000 citations annually and updates are made weekly.

The scope of the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global is broad. Theses and dissertations are sourced from over 3,100 institutions and 100 countries. Over 50 languages are represented in the database, although cursory searches reveal that at least 3.8 of the over 5+ million records are in English (see Critical Evaluation for details). The database is truly multidisciplinary, with theses and dissertations from all of the major subjects and disciplines. The earliest records in the database date back to 1637, and there are numerous dissertations drawn from the nineteenth century.

Theses and dissertations are sourced from universities and colleges worldwide. Generally, theses and dissertations end up in PQDT via one of three methods: submissions via ProQuest’s online proprietary ETD Administrator tool; individual FTP submissions with a fee; and online harvesting from institutional repositories by institutional agreement via ProQuest’s Open Archives Initiative (Veve, 2020). ProQuest also partners with a variety of organizations to source and share citations. PQDT is the official repository of the Library of Congress and as such, contains citations for unpublished theses and dissertations from “all major universities” in the United States (Library of Congress, 2020). ProQuest has also partnered with the China Academic Library and Information System since 2017 to provide access to graduate work from over 60 Chinese universities (ProQuest, 2020). Through the Digital Archiving and Access Program (DAAP), ProQuest works with university libraries to digitize old theses and dissertations. ProQuest also partners with a variety of other databases such as MLA, PsycInfo, Google Scholar, Compendex, Inspec, ERIC, and MathSciNet to increase the visibility of dissertations. Individual authors retain the copyright for their work, royalties are available, and authors can request an embargo.

Graduate students and researchers of all types will find this ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global useful. Graduate students use this database to share their work and to find sample theses and dissertations on their topic or from their institution. Researchers use the database to find the newest research on a given topic. Researchers also study the content, subjects and genre of theses and dissertations to understand changes in the field, interdisciplinarity, and research habits of graduate students. To support this research, ProQuest reports a large demand for text mining software for the collection, and has developed TDM Studio, an additional ProQuest product, which can be used to extract and analyze data from dissertations and theses in the database.

User Interface/Navigation/Searching
The user interface for ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global is fairly intuitive and will be familiar to those who have used other ProQuest products. PQDT has many specialized search features that are unique to dissertation and theses which make using this database easy for the type of content it contains.

The landing page for PQDT (see Figure 1) defaults to an advanced search with multiple search boxes and fields. The database can be searched via Basic Search, Advanced Search, and by Browsing. Browsing allows a user to browse by hundreds of defined subjects in the database, or by the country or institution from which the theses or dissertation was completed.

The advanced search options include 24 searchable fields. Many of these fields are common to other academic databases, such as abstract, author, title, publication year, and subject headings. Unfortunately, subject headings are not sourced form Library of Congress Subject Headings which could save researchers time and effort. Given that this database provides access to dissertations and theses exclusively, many fields have been designed that are unique to this topic. For example, one can search by the school name/code, by school/name location (country or state), department, degree, advisor, or committee member. These specialized fields are particularly useful for graduate students to find sample dissertations completed under their advisor or in their field. As there is growing interest to analyze the
references from theses and dissertations, the database also includes searchable fields for reference, cited author, cited document, cited publication date, and cited publication title. Searching or limiting by subject category can be useful, but there’s been some critique about whether, in the increasingly interdisciplinary world we live in, these categories accurately represent the subjects of theses and dissertations (Bowman et al, 2014).

The results page provides a variety of limiters along the left-hand side. For example, a sample search for “literacy education” reveals 302,792 results (Figure 2). Results can be sorted by relevance or by oldest or newest date. Up to 100 selected results can be exported at a time as citations, to e-mail, and to citation managers.

The landing page for any record will open to the Full text-PDF view if available. From there, you can also view the Abstract/Details (see Figure 3), and in newer records, a page for the references. Useful widgets on the record page include links to documents that share the same references, links to other theses and dissertations that have cited this record, and Related Items. When available, full text is normally available as a PDF. While PDFs are easy to use, they don’t always have accessible heading structures for screen readers.

Although an account is not necessary to use this database, an optional My Research Account with ProQuest allows you to save documents, searches, and interface preferences. Users can also setup alerts and RSS feeds for searches.
When it comes to accessibility, ProQuest responds as expected for a vendor this large. A quick mobile test reveals that the layout resizes well and is functional. ProQuest asserts that they conduct regular accessibility checks of their products and “aim to meet Level AA of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) and Section 508 of the US Rehabilitation Act for features and functions” (ProQuest, n.d.). ProQuest products work with screen readers such as JAWS, NVDA, and VoiceOver.

**Critical Evaluation**

ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global has been long known as a strong indexer for dissertations, and as such, most major institutions in North America, Canada, and many institutions in Europe index their dissertations with ProQuest. ProQuest’s familiar interface and specialized searchable fields for dissertations make finding theses and dissertations easy. When available, full text is easy to access, and ordering is available for many other documents.

As a librarian, I have encountered very few challenges with this database. I wish that exporting large numbers of full text documents or references was available for text or data mining, but given that there is strong demand for this, I am not shocked that ProQuest offers an additional product, TDM Studio, designed specifically to analyze the vast content in this database.

While PQDT has unrivaled coverage of dissertations from the United States, coverage begins to drop off once outside of the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. A search for the letter “a” in PQDT with no specified search field and no limits on August 4, 2021, returned over 4.4 million of the 5+ million records housed in this database. Analyzing the language and source country of these records reveals that, at least for this search, over 85% of the records are English-language, and over half of the records (2.5 million) are from the United States. The United Kingdom, the Peoples Republic of China, and Canada are also well represented in this search. The letter “a” may not exist in other languages, so this search has many limitations, but it does illustrate some limits to PQDT’s coverage. This doesn’t diminish the database, but I would recommend that those searching for dissertations from countries other than those mentioned may benefit from searching a country-specific repository.

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Product URL: <https://about.proquest.com/en/dissertations/>
One more warning about coverage. While the database does contain dissertations and theses, the coverage of dissertations is much more comprehensive than theses (Library of Congress, 2020). If theses from a particular institution aren’t included, it may be best to search the institutional repository for these.

Competitive Products
While ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global is probably the easiest to use and has the best searchable metadata for dissertations and theses worldwide, depending on whether you’re looking for dissertations or theses, and where they were published, competitive products exist. A number of free databases are beginning to index dissertations and theses. Of these, the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (<http://www.ndltd.org/>) is the largest with over 6 million records. While the interface is fairly dated, it appears to have stronger global scope and language coverage than PQDT. ProQuest Open contains a subset of the PQDT content and provides free access to open access dissertations. WorldCat also allows searching for Thesis/Dissertation as a document type, and the FirstSearch platform for WorldCat Dissertations is its own standalone database.

If you are looking for dissertations from outside of the United States, coverage may be more comprehensive in country-specific dissertation databases such as the British Library’s Electronic Theses Online Service (EThos), DART-Europe E-theses portal, Theses Canada Portal or the Chinese Electronic Theses and Dissertations. The Center for Research Libraries (CRL) in Chicago also contains over 800,000 dissertations from outside of the U.S. and can be searched from the main CRL catalog (Center for Research Libraries, n.d.). Also, depending on the institution and department, finding master’s theses may be better suited to the local institutional repository as these are less often indexed in PQDT. Lastly, ProQuest partners with many subject databases and Google Scholar to share dissertation metadata. This means that many of the records contained in the database are also available elsewhere. Considering all of these options, PQDT is still the largest curated collection of dissertations in the world.

Purchase & Contract Provisions
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Authentication
ProQuest supports a number of authentication options including IP address, proxy server, barcode, Shibboleth, and Open Athens. They additionally offer support for other authentication methods on an account-by-account basis.

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Alissa Droog (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2868-8495>) is an Assistant Professor and the Education & Social Sciences Librarian at Northern Illinois University where she works primarily with faculty and graduate students in the College of Education.