

CASE STUDY: PROQUEST DISSERTATIONS & THESES PUBLISHING

Loyola University Chicago

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Loyola University Chicago offers a number of PhD and masters programs, both at the graduate school itself and through professional graduate programs based at the schools for business, law, nursing, social work and education. The institution also offers graduate degrees in biomedical sciences through Loyola University Medical Center.

The university's mission is about social justice and a great deal of emphasis across all disciplines—from the hard sciences to the social sciences—is placed on some form of social justice. For example, social science graduate students work in the community and with organizations—their English graduates work on literacy programs in the local community—whereas in the science field, many of the students work with local health clinics. As Jessica Horowitz, Associate Dean, Graduate School explained, "There is a feel, at least, at Loyola about helping and serving others."

But as well as providing support for local communities, Loyola extends this social responsibility to its own work with students and has recently undertaken a workshop on financial literacy to explain to students the intricacies and responsibilities of finances and budgeting. "The graduate school is involved in several grants and one of our goals is to provide more information about finances to help students become acquainted with these issues," said Jessica. "This has become a really hot topic in graduate programs and undergraduate programs as well. Students have an enormous amount of debt, and given the state of global economics right now, even with a graduate degree, they can't be sure they'll find a job."

This is something the institution takes very seriously; so help has been put in place to try and teach students to be responsible with regards to the types of loans they take out and how best to budget. The institution is also trying to establish more certificate programs at the graduate level as well, just to give students an alternative to the masters degree. As Jessica noted, "It surprises me that students at all the different levels really have little understanding of budget, of what it means to take out some of these loans that run into tens of thousands of dollars, that will require huge payments every month."

In addition to providing guidance and practical support for students, Loyola's other mission is to make sure their work is accessible by others who wish to read it. For many years, the university has been a customer of ProQuest and participated in their dissertations program. "We've been working with ProQuest for many years because it was a way to have students' work be out there for the public to see. Visibility of our students' work is very important to us—and of course it's vitally important for students to know that their theses and dissertations are published and accessible to others. When I came onboard, we were still working with paper submissions so one of the first things I did was to meet with the library and move us to electronic submission. This happened really quickly, which was great! It improved workflows for us and meant students' work was available much more quickly."

As well as including works in ProQuest's dissertations and theses database, the institution has its own repository which was established in 2013. However, the graduate school has always felt that it is important for them to be included in the major repository at a national level which, for most USA universities, is seen as ProQuest. As Jessica concurred, "I think we all look to ProQuest rather than developing a home-grown version as it means our work is accessible along with everyone else's. To me, it didn't occur to question why we were part of ProQuest. I mean, why wouldn't we be? To me it's the primary repository, it's the one that's most known and it's easily searchable."

Not only does ProQuest's repository make Loyola's work accessible alongside other research, but Jessica thinks it provides a safe haven for research which is future-proof. "I love the question that we sometimes get at these national meetings that say "Well, what happens when PDFs are no longer used?" Of course the answer is with the next technological step forward, we will make sure that the PDFs are converted to whatever format it becomes. But you realize that whatever happens in the future, you know that this research (on ProQuest) will be safe, that future generations will be able to access it. If you have just an institutional repository—though I think this is important too—there's always a chance that those can be comprised. So for my institution, it's also the safety of a backup, of always knowing it's there."

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Jessica Horowitz, Associate Dean, Graduate School,
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Working with ProQuest has also been a rewarding experience, with staff in the publishing and customer service departments providing support and advice at the time it is needed. "I always appreciate it when companies get back to me quickly," said Jessica, "and ProQuest has never disappointed in that. Usually when I contact them it's something fairly timely, something I need to get back to somebody about and they always respond very quickly."

For the foreseeable future, however, Loyola will continue to focus on supporting students with the more practical aspects of life after university, providing advice on the types of jobs they can do after graduation as well as how to manage the inevitable student debt. But when it comes to advising on a dissertations publishing service, would the institution be happy to recommend ProQuest? "Absolutely!" said Jessica. "In fact I already have recommended ProQuest many times at regional, national and international meetings and conferences. Marlene Coles is delightful. They're doing a really good job and I look forward to how else they can support us. For example, they could do some data collection to give us a little idea of what's out there and what the next trend is and how we can all move forward. It's something that would be really useful, and ProQuest is in a position to help."

Disclaimer: The views contained in this document are the personal views of Jessica Horowitz and are not necessarily representative of Loyola University Chicago.