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## **Digital Dissertations at the Library of Congress**

Since 1993 the U.S. Copyright Office has been developing **CORDS, (*Copyright Office Electronic Registration, Recordation and Deposit System*)**, a fully automated system for electronic copyright registration and deposit. The CORDS system allows the U.S. Copyright Office to accept applications for copyright registration and deposits online. It is a major step forward in the application of advanced technology for providing an efficient and innovative copyright registration and deposit mechanism, and also provides an effective way for the Library of Congress to acquire new electronic publications for its national digital library collections. Copyright claims are filed electronically by test partners through CORDS by sending applications and deposits in electronic form and charging fees to active Deposit Accounts with the Copyright Office. The CORDS system facilitates full electronic processing, both front-end preparation by claimants and back-end processing by the Copyright Office.

In January 1999 the U.S. Copyright Office and the Library of Congress (LC) signed a CORDS Cooperative Agreement with UMI Company (now, Bell & Howell Information & Learning) that initiated fully electronic copyright registration and deposit of dissertations over the Internet through CORDS to the U.S. Copyright Office. In addition, the agreement designates UMI's *ProQuest Digital Dissertations* as the Library's official off-site repository for a collection of more than 150,000 dissertations and theses converted to digital form since 1997, as well as those to be produced in the future. The agreement marks the first time that the Library has designated an official off-site repository for digital collections deposited with the Library of Congress.

For the Library of Congress, this is a major step that represents an innovative method for expanding its collection of digital research tools and for improving access, while reducing costs. The digital dissertations program also allows the Library to provide access to the increasing number of newly created dissertations that are available only in electronic form. This innovative partnership enables the Library fulfill part of its mission, which is to make its resources available and useful to the Congress and the American people and sustain and preserve a universal collection of knowledge and creativity for future generations.

Each year, UMI Dissertations Publishing receives over 40,000 U.S. Ph.D. dissertations and Masters' theses for publication. As part of its services, UMI provides copyright registration through the U.S. Copyright Office for those authors desiring registration. An average of 17,000 to 20,000 authors take advantage of this service each year, making UMI the largest single contributor of copyright registration applications to the U.S. Copyright Office.



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*ProQuest Digital Dissertations*, a comprehensive digital archive of every dissertation submitted to UMI for publication from January 1997, was developed in concert with its dissertation microfilming and publishing venture, and UMI began digitization of all paper submissions in 1997. Later in 1997 representatives from the U.S. Copyright Office and Library of Congress visited UMI to present an overview of CORDS and to propose a cooperative project for the submission of copyright registration and deposit of digital dissertations electronically. By 1999, the Copyright Office/LC/UMI CORDS project was underway. The U.S. Copyright Office provided UMI Dissertations Publishing with required software and technical assistance. Weekly technical conference calls were instituted, and initial testing with single titles was followed by full production processing in April 1999. The size of files being transmitted, the quantity of documents being transferred, essential duplicate-checking techniques and other lessons learned required numerous adjustments to the CORDS software and submission process. Programming changes to support batch submissions and system-to-system communications were made at both the Library of Congress and UMI before the system became fully operational.

Through *ProQuest Digital Dissertations*, UMI Dissertations Publishing is now registering and depositing copies of dissertations and theses in digital form (PDF files) using the CORDS system and providing the Library with access to UMI's digital repository in lieu of the Library's creating its own digital repository of these. For the near future, the Library is continuing to acquire a microform version of all dissertations as the "best edition" for archival purposes. The agreement builds upon a long-term partnership UMI Company and the Library of Congress have enjoyed since the late 30's when the company, then University Microfilms Inc., began registering dissertations with the U.S. Copyright Office.

The Library's comprehensive dissertation collections are one of its most heavily used resources by researchers and other users at the Library of Congress. Providing access to these dissertations in digital form through *ProQuest Digital Dissertations* in the Library's reading rooms gives researchers faster and easier access, more flexibility and greatly expanded searching capabilities for their varied research purposes.

The copyright system has been a part of the Library of Congress since 1870 and administered by a separate department within the Library since 1897. In addition to administering the copyright law, the U.S. Copyright Office creates and maintains the national public record of copyright registrations and recorded documents, provides technical assistance and policy advice on copyright issues to Congress and executive branch agencies, offers information to the general public and obtains copies of works for the collections of the Library of Congress. For more information, visit the U.S. Copyright Office website at: [www.loc.gov/copyright](http://www.loc.gov/copyright). For additional information about CORDS, see the Copyright Office website or the CORDS website at [www.CORDS.loc.gov](http://www.CORDS.loc.gov).

UMI Dissertations Publishing publishes doctoral dissertations from more than 99 percent of the accredited institutions of higher education in North America, as well as a growing number of universities throughout Europe and Asia. The Dissertation Abstracts database, compiled during the past 60 years, surpassed 1.5 million titles in 1998. UMI Dissertations Publishing collects, organizes, and provides value-added information to libraries (academic, public, government, and business and school (grade K-12. More information about UMI Dissertations Publishing is available on the Internet at [www.umi.com](http://www.umi.com).

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