Student Support and Training for ETD Programs

The ETD Initiative at the University of Florida

http://etd.helpdesk.ufl.edu
History

• 1997, the University of Florida begins an initiative to implement electronic archival of theses and dissertations.

• It was agreed that graduate students would need technical assistance, so the ETD Technical Support division within the UF Computing Help Desk was created.
Initial Services Provided

- Design and develop a formatting template for electronic theses and dissertations.
  - Microsoft Word 97/98 (Windows & Macintosh)
  - Corel WordPerfect 6.0
- Provide online support for the formatting template.
  - http://etd.circa.ufl.edu
History - Continued

• In January 2001, the Graduate Council mandated that university-wide, all theses and dissertations produced by the incoming class of Fall 2001 be submitted electronically.

• By 2003, an infrastructure needed to be in place to support the graduate students.
Service Evolution

1. Seminars / Workshops
   - A collection of informational and technical seminars to prepare graduate students for successful submission of their electronic thesis/dissertation.
   - These seminars are presented each semester in collaboration with the Editorial Office of the Graduate School.
Service Evolution – continued

2. Consultation

• One-on-one consultation with clients through e-mail, phone and in person, to assist with any technical challenges or formatting issues the client is having.
  • Acceptable ETD file formats
  • Formatting assistance
  • Additional training on computer software
Service Evolution – continued

3. Formatting Templates
   – Develop and maintain formatting templates which are easily downloadable from our website.
     • Microsoft Word
     • Corel WordPerfect (not as popular anymore)
     • LaTeX (pronounced Lah-Tek)
Service Evolution – continued

4. On-going Technical Support

– Troubleshoot recurring problems with MS Word, Adobe Acrobat PDF conversions
– Provide technical support for users of the LaTeX typesetting application in the production of their theses and dissertations.
– Coordinate with your Editorial Office or equivalent.
Service Evolution – continued

5. Online Training (Self-Help)
   – Provide online tutorials regarding formatting requirements, technical troubleshooting tips and deadline dates.
   • Application based tutorials
     – MS Word (Office 2003 and now Office 2007)
     – LaTeX 2e
     – Adobe Acrobat 8.0
Client Traffic 2000-2003

July statistics
2000 = 42 contacts
2001 = 93 contacts
2002 = 292 contacts
2003 = 683 contacts

Contact = an e-mail or one-on-one consultation
What training was needed?

• **Summary of Policies Procedures and Guidelines**
  – Final semester checklist / deadlines (Masters / Doctoral)
  – Technical support services provided

• **Introduction to Formatting Template (MS Word)**
  – Formatting requirements
  – Using the formatting templates

• **Introduction to ETDs and PDF Conversion**
  – Best practices, acceptable file formats
  – Conversion utilities (Adobe PDFMaker, FlashPaper)
Training Model #1

• 2000-2001
  – Lectures in computer classrooms
  – 1 to 2 hours each
  – Application based (MS Word, WordPerfect)
  – Held after 5:00 PM
  – Different days the week
  – Average attendance 15-24 per session
  – 3 workshops total each semester
Training Model #2

- 2002-2004
  - Service demand increases dramatically!
  - MS Word lectures moved to auditoriums (60-150 registrants per session).
  - All three training topics combined into a half-day seminar (to get the most exposure time).
  - Sessions held on weekends (Sundays 1:00 – 4:00 PM)
  - 5 sessions held per semester (accommodating 350 total participants per semester).
Training Model #3

- 2005-present
  - Demand begins to level out.
  - Surveys indicate a desire for more hands-on exposure (Training Model #1).
  - MS Word lectures moved to back to computer classrooms (25 registrants per session)
  - Multiple sessions held on various days of the week (from 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM)
The Effect of Training on Client Volume

ETD Client Contact Volume from January 2000 - March 2006

Number of Client Contacts

Months
Things to Ponder

• Self Help Opportunities
  – Helps to control staffing cost
  – 24/7 access to information
  – FAQ

• Seminars
  – Group training opportunity
  – Hands-on experience with guidance
Things to Ponder - continued

• Formatting Templates
  – Identify popular applications
  – Keep the templates up-to-date
  – Make sure they’re easy to use!

• Consultation
  – Staffing (Coordinator & Consultants)
  – Be ready for peaks & valleys near deadlines

  “It’s either feast or famine…” – Helen Martin
Future Considerations

• What will become of your service in the future?
  – Continued funding / cost recovery
  – Efficient use of staffing during slow times
• Application Support Center
  – Extended ETD formatting assistance
  – Support for additional applications
Questions?