



Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) and African Knowledge

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Venue: Wits University South-West Engineering Building,
Boardroom



What is Institutional Repository (IR) - WIReDSpace (Wits Institutional Repository on DSpace)

WIReDSpace is a digital archive which centralises, preserves, and provides access to Wits' intellectual output. WIReDSpace benefits institution by raising its profile and scholars by bringing broader dissemination, increased use, and enhanced professional visibility of scholarly research.

Importance for WIReDSpace

- **Improves data quality:** Implementing FAIR principles improves the quality and reproducibility of research data.
- **Enhances collaboration:** Makes it easier for researchers to share and reuse data, which can accelerate scientific discovery.
- **Promotes transparency:** Increases the transparency of research and supports open science practices.
- **Supports data management:** Provides a framework for effective data management beyond a single use, helping to prevent data from becoming siloed.

Institutional repository (WIReDSpace) implements the FAIR principles to ensure research data is **Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable**, thereby improving data quality and encouraging reuse and collaboration. WIReDSpace helps make research more transparent and effective, even for data that cannot be openly shared.

Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) and African Knowledge

Electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) can be defined as theses and dissertations by masters and doctoral students that are digitised, submitted, archived and are accessible in electronic formats. There are two standard types of ETDs: (1) the first one is born digital, that is, a student-created digital document converted to the suitable submission format (usually PDF) and made available online with related metadata. (2) the second type is an electronic document created by the university scanning or digitising a student's printed thesis or dissertation.

Curating, uploading, and publishing Electronic Theses and Dissertations (ETDs) on WIReDSpace is a crucial practice that provides significant benefits for students, Wits, and the global research community by enhancing accessibility, maximising visibility and impact, and ensuring long-term digital preservation.

ETDs' Benefits for Students and Researchers

- **Increased Visibility and Citations:** Open access to ETDs ensures they are easily found via global search engines like Google and Google Scholar, leading to a wider audience and potentially higher citation counts for the author's work.
- **Wider Dissemination of Research:** ETDs in IRs are accessible to researchers worldwide, especially those in developing countries who may have limited access to subscription-based journals, which helps in avoiding duplication of research efforts and fostering collaboration.
- **Enhanced Research Skills:** The process of preparing and submitting an ETD in an electronic format helps students develop valuable digital literacy and data management skills that are increasingly important in modern academia.
- **Improved Research Quality:** Access to a vast range of prior work helps current students examine different research methodologies and writing styles, thereby improving the quality of their own research.
- **Cost and Time Savings:** Electronic submission and access save students and researchers the time and expense associated with printing, binding, and physically retrieving/reshelving paper copies.



The Importance of Metadata Elements in ETDs and the Importance of SDGs for ETDs

Metadata is “data about data”—information that describes, explains, locates, or makes it easier to retrieve and manage an ETD.

Metadata Benefits for Students and Universities

- **For Students:**
 - Increased visibility
 - Citation and academic recognition
 - Easier integration into global research networks
- **For Universities:**
 - Strengthens research reputation
 - Enhances repository quality
 - Improves reporting, analytics, and decision-making



Importance of SDGs in ETDs

- **What Are the SDGs?**

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a 17-goal global framework adopted by the UN to address social, economic, and environmental challenges by 2030.
- Universities play a crucial role through research, teaching, and innovation.

- **Why SDGs Matter for ETDs**

- Aligns research with global development priorities
- Encourages socially responsible scholarship
- Demonstrates research contribution to sustainable development
- Supports national and institutional SDG reporting
- Promotes interdisciplinary thinking



How ETDs Support the SDGs

Student research often contributes to areas such as:

- SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being; SDG 4: Quality Education
- SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy; SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
- SDG 13: Climate Action; SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Importance of Tagging ETDs with SDGs

- Helps identify research contributions toward specific SDGs
- Enables repositories to track SDG-related outputs
- Supports university rankings (e.g., Times Higher Education Impact Rankings)
- Enhances discoverability of sustainability research
- Facilitates partnerships between researchers and industry/government



Why Metadata Matters for ETDs

1. Enhances discovery and access

- Helps search engines, library catalogues, and databases locate ETDs.
- Ensures students' research can be found globally.

2. Improves research visibility

- Accurate metadata increases citations and academic impact.

3. Supports interoperability

- Essential for harvesting by repositories (e.g., OAI-PMH, OpenAIRE).

Key Metadata Elements for ETDs

Title

Author

**Institution, Faculty &
Department/Unit**

**Supervisor(s)/Co-
Supervisor(s)**

Abstract

Keywords

**Sustainable
Development Goals
(SDGs)**

**Name of publisher,
Copyright statement &
Date of
submission/publication**

**Degree (qualification
type, i.e.
Dissertation/Thesis)**

**Rights
statement/licensing**

**Persistent identifiers
(e.g., ORCID, DOI, URI
Handle)**

How to Access WIReDSpace and ETDs Communities/Collections

<https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/home>

<https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/communities/da483ca6-9262-470a-ae21-471270e56b04>

Thank you! Ndaa!

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