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Grand Valley State University Libraries

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Students Expand Reach of Work

What once might have gathered dust is now collecting clicks. Grand Valley State University students are sharing their theses, dissertations, and other scholarly outputs with the world as ScholarWorks@GVSU has transformed the way both undergraduates and graduates share their research.

Established in 2008, ScholarWorks has grown steadily to include more than 10,000 items, with more than 3 million downloads as of 2016. This online repository shares scholarly and creative work by Grand Valley faculty, staff, and students and has been accessed by people on every continent except Antarctica and nearly every country on Earth.

Several years ago Graduate Council, a faculty-led governance committee of the University Academic Senate, updated the Thesis and Dissertation Guidelines for the Graduate School to be more in line with advanced technology. This paved the way for graduate students to reach a broader audience.

Before the update of the guidelines, students printed and bound their thesis or dissertation and the documents were held at the library. Now graduate theses and dissertations are published through ScholarWorks. Jennifer Palm, Assistant to the Graduate School and

Thesis and Dissertation Coordinator, said ScholarWorks is great exposure for the students, faculty advisors, and graduate education as a whole at Grand Valley.

“The internal review and external availability of our student’s scholarship elevates all graduate programs and empowers us to gauge consistency, quality, and academic rigor across campus,” Palm said.

In addition to graduate theses and dissertations, students in the Frederik Meijer Honors College have the opportunity to share their senior projects in ScholarWorks.

Jeffrey Chamberlain, Director of the Frederik Meijer Honors College, thinks the biggest benefit is that by using ScholarWorks people from all over the world have the opportunity to read student work.

He cited one particular project titled “Fifth Grade Year Long Social Studies Unit Plan” which has been downloaded more than 6,000 times in 66 countries.

“People are clearly finding the project valuable in learning how to teach. That’s really making a difference in the world,” Chamberlain said.

Student-run journals, such as the *Grand Valley Journal of History*, provide students with the opportunity to publish original work and share new knowledge with an audience that extends beyond the university. Scott St. Louis was formerly the editor-in-chief before he graduated and began his position as Program Manager for the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies at Grand Valley. The journal provided him with valuable experience in team leadership and deadline-oriented project management.

“Working for a journal published in

ScholarWorks gave me a front-row seat to the power of open access. It was fulfilling to see our papers being downloaded all over the world,” St. Louis said.

An undergraduate essay published by another student-run journal *Cinesthesia* was adopted as part of a course pack for students in a media and communications research methods course at New York University in July of 2016. Matt Ruen, Scholarly Communications Outreach Coordinator for University Libraries, said this is a great glimpse at the impact ScholarWorks has on the world.

ScholarWorks is used as a tool for collaborative community engagement. Danielle Lake, Assistant Professor for Liberal Studies, designed a liberal studies general education course Wicked Problems of Sustainability (LIB 322), where students partner with local nonprofits, K-12 teachers, and community members, which stemmed from her 2014 dissertation scholarship. Since the course’s implementation three years ago, students have been able to support multiple local food movements, and social sustainability challenges.

Lake said, “The students’ publications, shared openly through ScholarWorks, have resulted in over 2,000 downloads across the world, further fostering student scholarship.”

For more information and to explore ScholarWorks@GVSU visit <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/>