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Basic and Automated: Why Two ETD Templates at Mississippi State University

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Basic and Automated: Why Two ETD Templates at Mississippi State University?

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Why a Template?

- Complicated formatting requirements
- Graduate school requested an easier way for students to get through the process
- Eletical and Computer Engineering built a LaTeX template

Objections to a Template

- Department requirements vary for many sections of a document
- Individual departments require different numbering styles for their TOC and headings
  - Additional lists in the preliminary pages are required for some departments, i.e. nomenclature, lists of equations and lists of symbols
- Citation guide differences
- Reference lists vary depending upon pre-publication requirements
- Templates are difficult to create
- Templates are often not used correctly, resulting in extra time spent to "fix" errors
- Return on investment may be low

Timeline

- Fall 2007 – *Standards* revision (preparation for requirement of electronic submissions)
- Fall 2007 – Requirement of electronic submission begins
- March 2008 – request from Graduate School for a T/D template
- June 2008 – Beta version of "basic" template created
- Fall 2008 – Research and design of automated template begins
- February 2009 – Beta version of automated template created
- Spring 2010 – Initial beta testing of automated template
- Fall 2010 - Created an automated template for use by the Psychology Department incorporating APA requirements
- Summer 2010 – Final alterations to the automated templates
- Summer 2010 – Created instructions for using the automated templates
- July 2010 – Added templates to the T/D website for open use

Pros and Cons of a Template

Cons:

- Templates can be hard to use
- Templates create more reading of instructions for authors
- Faculty revisions can break the template even if the author follows directions
- Students assume template is faulty when errors occur
- Creates new support issues

Pros:

- Provides good will with graduate school
- Provides learning opportunities for important features of MS Word
- Increases consistency in formatting
- Can reduce the number and type of errors in documents
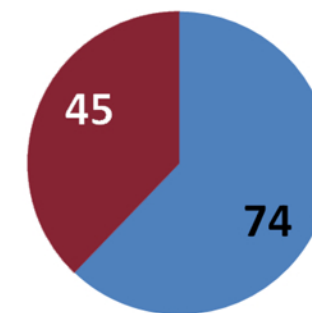- Creates easier fixes

Basic Template Features

- Easy to use
- Disables MS Word's automatic formatting
- Only four pages of instructions
- Development was quick (one week)
- Manages the formatting needs for most theses/dissertations
- Almost impossible to break

Automated Template Features

- One Single Document
- Linked Content Control Boxes
- Preset format and page numbering
- Automatic Table of Contents
- Automatic List of Tables and List of Figures
- Preset Styles = consistent formatting
- Creates Hyperlinks

Authors' Use of Templates - Spring 2011

■ Didn't use templates ■ Used templates

45

74

Workshops

Beginning Fall 2011 workshops are planned and will feature:

- Hands on conversion using the templates
- Discussion of unique formatting challenges
- Feedback on template functionality and end-user needs

Marketing

- Email blast to department graduate coordinators and grad students
  - Announce the template
  - Send list of workshops available
  - Send links to the templates and instructions
- Add announcement on the library's "News" feed
- Create a library poster for placement around the library study areas
  - add poster to the library website

Adaptation

- Discipline Specific Requirements
- Publisher Specific Requirements

Updates

- Bug fixes
- Feature additions
- Working with new versions of Word
- Working with new versions of the Standards

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