

Open access to Cardiff University research theses



One upon a time, it was the case that your PhD theses, once spell-checked (repeatedly), submitted, viva-ed (not as excruciating as you'd imagined), corrected, lovingly hard-bound and submitted gain, this time for real, sat in dusty splendour on a library shelf for a few years. But no longer – since August 2011 and a change to Cardiff University theses submission and storage regulations, all research-level theses (mostly PhD, but also MD, MPhil, DClInPsy and DEdPsy) are available from our institutional repository [ORCA](#).

There were a number of reasons for this regulation change: saving shelf space in the libraries, saving costs for the student who no longer has to pay for multiple printed copies, but primarily it is to allow open access to the innovative and exciting work of Cardiff's early career researchers, and to facilitate the advancement of knowledge for academic and social benefit. As of April 2018, we have 4, 555 research theses in ORCA, on topics such as [The News of the World hacking scandal](#), [autism and equine therapy](#), [the European Gas Network](#) and (my favourite!) [the social life of street food](#). It's easy to access theses on ORCA: go to the browse menu, select type and then thesis, and you will get a list of all theses in ORCA; alternatively, if you want to look at theses for a particular school, follow the path, Browse, School (Complete), then select the school and the item type. Our research theses are also accessible from the [library catalogue](#).

Theses are among our most read items, regularly topping our most downloaded records stats, but some students are concerned about the implications of their work being publically available immediately, especially in relation to confidentiality issues, or book publication. These are valid concerns (although click [here](#) for an interesting blog post debunking the fear that publishers won't touch a thesis that has been made available online), which is why the regulations allow students to apply for an embargo period, usually between one and two years, although it can be up to five, where the online thesis is restricted for public use. More information is available on the [student intranet pages](#).

Most UK universities now hold their research level theses in their institutional repositories, including [Oxford](#), [Cambridge](#) and our GW4 partners [Bristol](#), [Exeter](#) and [Bath](#). The British Library's [ETHOS](#)

service holds records of over 480, 000 doctoral theses which can be either downloaded immediately or a copy ordered. And a quick Google will find the theses of many prominent cultural icons, including [Einstein](#), [Stephen Hawking](#) and a certain [Dr Brian May](#). It's a kind of magic indeed.

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