

# Resource Center

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## Accessing Dissertations in Human-Animal Studies

A recent article (Gerbasi, Anderson, Gerbasi, & Coultis, 2002) compared the number of doctoral dissertations in Human-Animal Studies registered in the 1980s to the number in the 1990s. It was found that the number had doubled from the earlier decade to the later one. It seemed a shame to relegate the information accumulated on hundreds of dissertations to a computer disk accessible only to myself, so the information was given a searchable home on the PSYETA website (<http://www.psyeta.org/dissertations/dissertations.html>). These dissertations cover an amazing variety of topics and disciplines. For a detailed break down, refer to the above mentioned article or visit the PSYETA website. The purpose of this article is to acquaint you with the database's existence and to provide additional information on how to access the dissertations.

Accessing the actual abstracts and links to the dissertations requires access to UMI's *Digital Dissertations*. This is the current version of what previously was *Dissertation Abstracts*. From a library that subscribes to *Digital Dissertations* you can get almost all dissertations done since 1997 delivered free, in full text, to your desktop computer. Simply go through your library to the *Digital Dissertations* database, enter the author or key words of the dissertation for which you are searching, and when you find it submit your email address and UMI will send you a link to the available dissertation with instructions on how to save it. A word of caution is in order: The link will expire after 72 hours and you need to be able to save the dissertation either to your desktop or a CD-Writer. A dissertation of typical length will take 15 to 20 minutes to save. You may print the dissertation, but that would be extremely time-consuming. The dissertations are too large to be saved to an A-drive disk. Although PSYETA does not maintain a database of masters' theses, these often can be obtained in the same way. It is possible to purchase older dissertations from UMI.

If you do not have access to a library that subscribes to *Digital Dissertations*, then you will be much more limited in your ability to view the dissertations. On-line direct

access to the UMI site allows you to search abstracts from only the most recent two years; currently, that is 2002 and 2003. To do this, go to <http://www.umi.com/hp/Products/Dissertations.html>. You can select from either. Quoting from the site, "If you're looking for easy Web searching and ordering, check out *Dissertation Express* and *ProQuest Digital Dissertations*. *Dissertation Express* offers online ordering, and *ProQuest Digital Dissertations* offers the search capabilities needed to locate citations and abstracts. . . ."

The *ProQuest Digital Dissertations* option will search only the most recent 2 years, but it will allow you to view abstracts and first 24 pages of these on-line. The *Dissertation Express* option will allow you to find older dissertations but does not show you the abstracts or other information except for title, author, degree-granting university, access number, number of pages, and advisor. With access to other databases such as American Psychological Association's *PsycINFO*, it may be possible to view dissertation abstracts if the dissertation falls into a topic area that the particular database catalogues.

The PSYETA database of Human-Animal Studies is updated on a regular basis. We invite people who have completed a relevant dissertation to send us the particulars so that the dissertation can be added to the website database.

A final suggestion is in order for anyone who is doing a dissertation in Human-Animal Studies: If you want others to be able to find and identify your work as part of the ever growing field of Human-Animal Studies, be sure you give it a title that will allow search strategies to so identify your thesis. For example, if you were studying ways to solve the problems of surplus companion animals, you might title your work "Fido and Fluffy Get New Homes," which will never be found on a title search; alternatively, you might title your work "Solutions to the Problem of Companion Animal Overpopulation," which will be readily found and identified as relevant. The use of the word, "pet" is often problematic because it is the acronym for Positron Emission Tomography.

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## References

Gerbasi, K., Anderson, D., Gerbasi, A., & Coultis, D. (2002). Doctoral dissertations in human-animal studies: News and views. *Society & Animals*, 10 (4), 339-346.

ProQuest Online Dissertation Services (2003). <http://www.uni.com/hp/Products/Disertations.html>