



NDLTD ETD Award Winners 2004 - 2009: Case Studies in Success

When we completed a follow up survey for the past five years of ETD (electronic thesis and dissertation) award winners, we found some amazing success stories including students who were inspired to create and integrate innovative multimedia works into their ETD research components. These former graduate students have now gone on to become professionals who are making a difference in this world. Equally important are the graduate school administrators, librarians and information technology professionals who have worked tirelessly for ETD and open access advocacy on their campuses and regions. The recognition of these achievements through the ETD awards program could not have been possible during the early years without the generosity of Adobe Systems. The [NDLTD](#) (Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations) conceived of the awards program to acknowledge the importance of technological innovation, to promote the open exchange of scientific and cultural research information as well as to facilitate the potential for change in scholarly communications.

The following vignettes will highlight some of the gems we discovered over the years. We think the depth of outreach and impact that ETD Awards winners have had across the globe will astonish you. The stories convey powerful and meaningful messages of success with innovative use of technology in electronic theses and dissertations. They also provide supporting evidence of their profound impact technology in graduate education and scholarly communications in the post-graduate experience.



Renowned photojournalist Pete Souza wrote his master's thesis "*A Photojournalist on Assignment*" while at Kansas State University. Souza relied upon Adobe to design, archive and distribute the high-resolution digital photography in his [thesis](#), which highlights his 38-year [career](#), including award-winning shots ranging from prophetic images and an [interview](#) with Barack Obama, his famous images of the living presidents, as well as images of 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan. He left his post last year as assistant professor at Ohio University to become the [Official White House Photographer](#) for President Obama. Said Souza in his [award acknowledgements](#), "...Thanks to Adobe InDesign, the electronic version [of the thesis] didn't take nearly as long." Souza won the Innovative ETD Award in [2007](#).



Storyteller, actor, musician, composer and author Heather Forest wrote her dissertation "*Inside Story: An Arts-Based Exploration of the Creative Process of the Storyteller as Leader*" at Antioch University in the U.S. Her research in the area of leadership and change included a [PDF file with linked audio files](#) to accompany the text. The interactivity of this work allows the story characters to come alive for the reader. At the ETD conference, during her acceptance speech, Heather gave the audience a taste of her storytelling abilities where she "wowed" the crowd of conference delegates with her talents. Her [Web site](#) offers a wealth of information about her international post-graduation endeavors and access to her published works. Forest won the Innovative ETD Award in [2008](#).



Community activist Rick Schippling wrote his master's thesis "*Public Housing Redevelopment: Residents' Experiences with Relocation from Phase 1 of Toronto's Regent Park Revitalization*" at University of Waterloo, Canada. So inspired was Rick by the community planning issues he discovered in his research that he produced a full-length film [documentary](#) about the community to record and distribute the thoughts and feelings of residents impacted by this problematic urban renewal project. Schippling won the Innovative ETD Award in [2008](#).



Professor Peter Schirnbacher of the Computer and Media Services Department at Humboldt University has greatly helped to shape the NDLTD profile and to establish the NDLTD as an important player in the ETD community of Germany and Europe. His [efforts](#) have facilitated the development of a national strategy, policy and standards for digital document publishing and ETD program implementation in Germany. Schirnbacher won the ETD Leadership Award in [2007](#).



Angela McCutcheon of the Ohio University played “double duty” as both as graduate school administrator (Director of ETD program) while simultaneously earning her doctorate in education. Her unique perspective as both faculty/administrator and graduate student, along with her [enthusiasm](#) to automate the graduate school processes as well as organize ETD consortium efforts in the State of Ohio helped to pave the way for one of the first statewide institutional repository networks in the U.S., “OhioLink”. Today McCutcheon continues to be an advocate for the ETD cause as founder and leader of the [Ohio ETD Association](#), a support network that sustains the integrated efforts of over a dozen Ohio universities using the OhioLink system. McCutcheon’s dissertation research study attitudes towards ETDs and open access, including assessment of front-line faculty and staff who provide consultation and receive feedback from graduate students; the dissertation is scheduled to be completed during the spring 2010 semester. McCutcheon won the ETD Leadership Award in [2006](#).



Professor Shalini Urs of the Information Science Department at the University of Mysore in India lead the way to ETDs in India with the multilingual system “[Vidyanidhi](#)”, (meaning “treasure of knowledge” in Sanskrit), for the Indian University consortium and system. This was one of the first institutional repository systems in the world to develop applications capable of accommodating a multi-language database. With over 100 languages in India, this created a revolution in information sciences and paved the way for India to join the ETD revolution. Urs won the ETD Leadership Award in [2004](#).



Professor Ana Pavani of the Electrical Engineering Department at the Catholic Pontificate University, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil lead the way to ETDs in Brazil with the multilingual Latin American University consortium and system (Spanish and Portuguese are the official languages in Latin America). She spearheaded the ETD effort with the cooperation of the Ibero-American Science & Technology Education Consortium ([ISTEC](#)) and she contributes to the development of international standards and ETD program implementation. Presently Latin American ETDs account for almost 10% of all ETDs in the world. Pavani won the ETD Leadership Award in [2004](#).



Entrepreneur and scientist Evan Dorn is looking for life on other planets in unconventional ways. In his doctoral [dissertation](#) “*Universal Biosignatures for the Detection of Life*”, Dorn has set the trend as the ultimate digital scholar. Linked from the main dissertation file, Dorn has included the entire set of files used for his scientific experiments that included video clips, original data sets and software code. Thus, Dorn embraced a core philosophy of the scientific method by making his methods and discoveries known to all future scholars, who can in turn attempt to replicate the findings to prove or disprove his findings to advance knowledge further. Dorn is a graduate of California Institute of Technology where he researched Computation and Neural Systems. In his [video](#) acceptance speech, Dorn presents like a “young Carl Sagan” – both in the intensity of his knowledge as well as the passion and enthusiasm for his research. Presently he is [owner and lead developer](#) of the web development venture Logical Reality Design, and the CEO of music educational software startup Provectis Music, Inc. Dorn won the Innovative ETD Award in [2006](#).

Architect Christopher Spaw completed his master’s [thesis](#) “*1219 Colorado*” at Kansas State University,



which reveals his works in a novel ultra-wide panoramic view. This technique would have been impossible to achieve in a traditional print format. Said Spaw in acceptance of his [award](#) “...Please pass on my gratitude to the NDLT, as well as to Adobe Systems, not only for their generous support but also for making such great software, specifically Adobe Illustrator, without which I would not have been able to represent my thesis in the manner that it required.” Spaw now shares his talents with his students as an assistant professor at K-State. Spaw won the Innovative ETD Award in [2006](#).



Arts designer and educator Tim Broadwater wrote his master’s [thesis](#) “*www.Didartic.com: Activating the Didactic, Self-Reflective Fairytale through Hypermedia as a Model for the Art Education Activist*” at West Virginia University. In his thesis, Broadwater includes a PDF file linked to a virtual art exhibit presented as a pedagogical video game using Macromedia Flash technology. Broadwater said in his award acceptance [letter](#), “...I

believe the [ETD] award is recognition for the true value, and necessity for the merging of the artistic, technological, and educational fields.” Broadwater is now a multimedia designer and instructor for the WVU Office of the Provost, where among other things; he has participated in the [West Virginia Uncovered](#) rural journalism project to provide multimedia training for small rural newspapers around the state. Broadwater won the Innovative ETD Award in [2006](#).



Distinguished classical pianist and scholar Mira Kruja wrote her doctoral [dissertation](#) “*Piano Inside Out: The Expansion of the Expressive, Technical, and Sonorous Spectrum in Selected Twentieth-Century Art-Music Repertoire for the Modern Acoustic Piano*” at the University of Kentucky. “PDF let me easily link music score examples in my dissertation to related audio files to create a unique presentation of my research work which could only be presented in an electronic medium. Thank you to Adobe for making such great software,” said Kruja in her Awards acceptance [video](#). Kruja is presently an educator and scholar at Alabama A&M University; she also regularly performs for international concerts and recording sessions. Kruja won the Innovative ETD Award in [2005](#).



Historian Craig Bellamy wrote his master’s thesis “*Milkbar.com.au: The Everyday City and Globalisation*” at the University of Melbourne in Australia. His research topic was an experiment using a “[meta-data analysis engine](#)” to categorize and search (video-recorded) oral-history online. Bellamy created a post-graduation Web site “[Milkbar.com](#)” related to his dissertation work, which has now taken on a life of its own. Scholars from all over the world can visit the site, comment on the blog and network with other researchers. Bellamy won the Innovative Learning through ETDs Award in [2005](#).



Art historian Franci Cronje wrote her master’s [thesis](#) “*Problems Presented by New Media in South African Public Art Collections*” at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. In her research, Cronje explores the discrepancies between de facto representation of regional art and culture versus “official” representations of art and culture in local museums. Cronje’s thesis contains visuals and video clips, so it made sense for her to render the final document electronically, she said. In her [video](#) acceptance speech, Cronje stated emphatically “I would be lost in my daily work without the help of Adobe Photoshop and InDesign.” Cronje won the Innovative ETD Award in [2005](#).



Historian Shirley Stewart Burns wrote her doctoral [dissertation](#) “*Bringing Down the Mountains: The Impact of Mountaintop Removal on Southern West Virginia Communities*” at West Virginia University. The research has allowed her to accomplish her goal of raising the public consciousness and discourse about MTR (mountain top removal). Burns was the first WVU history doctoral student to grant open access to her dissertation upon graduation. The wildly popular (and contentious) topic earned her over 37,000 downloads of the dissertation during the first year following graduation (now over 150,000 downloads to date). As a result, she was able to reach a world-wide audience almost instantaneously, which culminated in the publication of her dissertation as a book “[Bringing Down the Mountains](#)” by the WVU Press that is now in wide use in the K-12 and higher education curriculum as well as of great interest the general public. Recently Burns served as an historical consultant for the film documentary “[Coal Country](#)”. The latest reports released by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency now recognize the hazardous environmental and health consequences of MTR, and has introduced proposals to ban the practice in the U.S. Similar protection efforts are underway in many countries to ban the devastating MTR practices world-wide. In her acceptance speech [video](#), Burns attributes her critical acclaim to providing open access to her dissertation research offered the most effective means to convey her message and make an impact. Burns also charmed the audience with her a cappella performance of her Bluegrass song “[Leave those Mountains Down](#)”. Burns won the Innovative Learning through ETDs Award in [2009](#).

Complete NDLTD ETD Awards programs information is available [online](#). The [Awards Committee](#) would love to know about innovative graduate students and scholarly communications leaders at your school. The deadline for [nominations](#) for the 2009 award year is February 15, 2010.

Article by [John H. Hagen](#), NDLTD Board of Directors, 2010.