

“PQDT Global is a one-stop shop. Researchers can see what has been written and then they can decide what direction they’re going to take their dissertation based on the research that other people have done in that area.”

– Ida Joiner, Author, Technologist, and Doctoral Student



PROQUEST DISSERTATIONS & THESES SUCCESS STORY

Progressing STEM Studies with a Critical Primary Research Source

How one researcher leverages dissertations to engage with current trends, cite a comprehensive foundation and build towards her own research goals.

Ida Joiner’s book *Emerging Library Technologies: It’s Not Just for Geeks* (published 2018) combines two of the scholar’s greatest passions: librarianship and STEM studies.

“I chose the topic for my book because of several projects on emerging technologies such as robotics, 3D printing, virtual/augmented reality, and other related topics that I developed or collaborated on in my role as the Technology Coordinator at the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM), Middle Atlantic Region (MAR),” Joiner said.

Joiner, who completed her MLIS at the University of Pittsburgh and has served as a Librarian and Educator for the Universal Academy School and is also currently pursuing her doctorate in Curriculum & Instruction at Texas Wesleyan University. The focus of her dissertation is on the role of emerging technologies in libraries and education, including the use of drones.

We recently spoke with Joiner about her work and on-going studies – as well as how using ProQuest Dissertations & Theses supports her research, teaching and learning goals.

Ida A. Joiner

Texas Wesleyan University

Author, Technologist, and Doctoral Student

• **Degree:** Ph.D. Curriculum & Instruction



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Using dissertations to discover cutting-edge research

"I use ProQuest Dissertations to research topics for a book I have coming out summer 2020 on drones in libraries," Joiner said.

To keep up with cutting-edge developments in the area of libraries and STEM, Joiner consults the database for the most recent dissertations in areas related to her current research. Doing so provides her insights on what other scholars are uncovering in their research, as well as helps Joiner keep on top of the latest trends, issues and discoveries that intersect with her interest in the use of drones in libraries.

For Joiner, being able to limit the search perimeters in the ProQuest Dissertations database has been particularly helpful. Because her research focuses on the burgeoning technologies, she limits the scope of her searches to dissertations from the last 3-5 years. "That's what I find very helpful," Joiner said. It saves the time and effort it would take to wade through irrelevant or outdated search results, she explained.

There are also authors whose work and insights with which she is familiar and it is also helpful to be able to narrow her searches to surface those dissertations more quickly – as well as dissertations that may be similar in order to build on and make connections between ideas and discoveries.

In addition, Joiner also recommends dissertations as a resource to her friends and colleagues who are working on other research projects.

"It's helpful for scholars to see what has already been written and then they can decide what direction to take with their own dissertations," she said.

Using dissertations to learn how to write a dissertation

Joiner recalled a weekly assignment in a course she had with Dr. Ken Helvey, Assistant Professor of Education – Doctoral Program at Texas Wesleyan University. It involved retrieving a dissertation from the database and using it to inform the dissertation writing process at an early point in the doctoral program.

For example, Joiner recalled studying dissertations to become familiar with APA writing and citation style by uploading it to RefWorks, ProQuest's reference management tool.

"It's a wonderful tool for organizing and keeping track of your dissertations," Joiner said. "What's great is that some of those dissertations I uploaded over a year ago and I still am able to access them. I can refer back to those dissertations anytime I want – they'll be there until I delete them."

Dr. Helvey provided a bit of background on the philosophy behind these assignments. He explained the idea was to get doctoral

students to start thinking about their dissertation – the most challenging and important part of the doctoral process – from the beginning of the program so they can be working toward it from the beginning.

"Nearly everyone can finish coursework," he said. "Not everyone can do the dissertation unless they're prepared. The more they're prepared, the better off they're going to be, and it's going to result in a quality product that is completed on schedule."

Dr. Helvey also noted that when it comes to helping doctoral candidates prepare for their dissertations, "ProQuest is the best. It's the standard for housing and databasing of all of the works that have gone on for decades. Their search mechanism is very easy to use."

How dissertations can inform better teaching – and a better future

"I'm a nerd and I've been using technology for a very long time," Joiner said about her motivations in working with STEM and librarianship.

"Having been a librarian in a public library, I've helped people with everything from business reference to how to write a resume, how to apply for job, I've seen it all. And done it all."

Joiner hopes that by disseminating her dissertation through ProQuest, her work can help other librarians embrace emerging technologies to support patrons in all of their endeavors – especially in an age when knowledge and awareness of STEM fields is of increasing critical importance.

"As people struggle with being displaced by technological developments in their careers, I want the library to be a place where they can find help," she said.

"I wrote my first book and continue with my research so librarians and information professionals have a place where they can learn about some of these technologies so that they can help people when they come into the library."

Thinking about the future of her students also keeps Joiner motivated in her research.

"I'm very concerned that we have, for example, 250,000 STEM related positions that companies can't fill in the U.S.," she said. "And so the reason why I'm passionate about this subject is because I see how so many students are not exploring the STEM areas. And that's where the future is."

"I've seen studies that indicate if you want to pursue a financially lucrative career in the future, there is going to have to be a very strong background in STEM," she continued. "So what also excites me is getting these students motivated to study the science, the technology, the engineering, the math – getting them excited about robots and drones and having it be fun for them."

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