

FILING WITHOUT FEAR: TIPS FOR A TROUBLEFREE EXPERIENCE OF DEFENDING AND FILING YOUR DISSERTATION

Tanya Merchant (Ph.D. in ethnomusicology, 2006)

1 May 2007

Things to remember about the dissertation process:

1. Don't worry so much—no dissertation is perfect and you shouldn't expect yours to be. (Save it for the book!)
2. From the beginning, make sure that you clearly understand your advisor's expectations about how often you should meet and have chapters completed. (It is also good to know whether your advisor plans to read the whole thing as a complete unit or read it chapter by chapter as you write.)
3. If there are problems with your committee, it is possible to change it (and it's fairly easy, provided everyone is amenable). The reconstitution of committee form is available online: <http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/gasaa/library/docreconst.pdf>
4. When forming/reconstituting a committee, keep in mind what their summer and sabbatical schedules are and when they will be traveling. Scheduling difficulties are a major consideration when looking at forming a five-member committee.
5. Your committee doesn't read the whole dissertation until it is finished and cleared by your advisor to submit for the defense. However, committee members will often agree to read one chapter that relates to their specialty/area of interest while you are writing.
6. Plan on submitting the finished dissertation to committee *at least* two weeks before your defense date. Bear this in mind when thinking through your timeline to completion.

Advice for the dissertation defense:

1. Don't worry so much--your advisor(s) wouldn't have let you submit your dissertation if they didn't think you were ready.
2. Expect to spend time waiting in the hallway while your committee talks about you and your work. (They'll send you out in the hall at least twice.)
3. Part of the defense includes a presentation of your work to your committee, and A/V examples are welcome. If you are using A/V, be sure to bring back ups of your examples, preferably on different media.
4. If you are using A/V, make sure to check out the appropriate carts and have the machinery set up ahead of time.

5. Bring multiple copies of your signature page to the defense, and have the committee sign them. This way if one goes missing while you are doing revisions, your dog eats it, you spill coffee on it, or something unexpected happens, you have other signed copies and don't have to chase down every member of your committee to sign a new page.

6. Expect to be assigned at least a few revisions for your dissertation before you file it. Because of this, leave time between your defense and the day you expect to file your dissertation (at least a week is optimal). Usually when revisions are assigned, all the committee members except one (usually your advisor) will sign after the defense, and the remaining member will sign once he/she has seen the revised and final version of the dissertation.

Advice regarding dissertation filing:

1. Make sure you've checked your formatting with the thesis and dissertation guidelines:

<http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/gasaa/library/thesisintro.htm>.

2. Bring a snack to keep in your pocket. Even if things go smoothly, filing is a long process that has you walking all over campus.

3. See the ruler lady for her advice and double checking your formatting *before* the day you plan to file (preferably before you defend). This will make the day you file go much smoother.

4. Don't try to file on the last possible day for graduating that quarter; there will be long lines and it will be extra stressful if you have to make changes. Allow yourself a day or two for leeway just in case there are complications.

The process for the day you file your dissertation (as it was in 2006):

1. First you need to go to Graduate Division in Murphy Hall with your title page, signature page, two copies of the dissertation approval form that you download from the Graduate Division website, and the *two* doctoral exit surveys. Once they look at that and sign off on it, take everything to the ruler lady.

2. The ruler lady is in YRL, not Powell as listed in some places on the web (2nd floor, up the stairs on the left, 1st door on the right).

3. You need two copies of your dissertation on 20 lb., 25% cotton paper, each in a manila envelope. (The envelopes are important--don't forget them!).

4. The ruler lady needs the Pro-Quest form and a check or money-order for \$65 in order for Pro-Quest to file for copyright on your behalf.

5. You can include copyrighted images in your dissertation if you have asked for permission to use them. (You may actually need the permission letters in hand for UMI to process them, but to file you only have to have *asked*).

6. On the signature page you should have no titles (like Dr. or Professor), but on the abstract you must refer to your chair as *Professor [first name] [last name]*.

7. After you file with the ruler lady you go back to graduate division, they sign off on you again and send you to the registrar's window to get a certificate of completion, and you're done.

8. Congratulations, Dr.!

9. Hold on to your certificate of completion, because you won't receive your Ph.D. diploma for another six months, and that certificate is official proof that you've finished the degree.

Finally:

It's usual to give a copy of your filed dissertation to each committee member. This is both a courtesy and a way to keep your work on their shelf, in their mind, etc. In the past a bound paper copy was expected; nowadays most faculty will be happy with a CD containing the files.

Copyright Tanya Merchant