

What you need to know about email offers to publish your thesis

You may be contacted by a publishing company offering to publish your University of Otago research. Often, these companies have found your thesis (randomly) on the web and will email you, offering to publish your thesis.

Content of this document

1. Where did this email come from?	1
2. Know your Intellectual Property (IP) rights and responsibilities	1
3. The publishing company wishes to publish my thesis as it stands with no editing. Is this possible?	2
4. Is a book the best way to tell the world about my research?	2
5. What if I have already published my research?	2
6. What you might want to do with your thesis in the future	2
7. What have others said about similar publishing offers that they have received	2
8. Otago University Research (OUR) Archive	2
9. OUR Archive: Credibility	2
10. OUR Archive: You retain your rights to publish	3
11. OUR Archive: Linking to your thesis that will remain stable	3

1. Where did this email come from?

The University of Otago was probably not party to the correspondence you received about publishing your thesis. (If they had been the University of Otago would have contacted you directly). Often, automated systems have identified your thesis on the web and the email you receive has been generated automatically by the publishing company. Ask your thesis supervisor about the appropriate person to contact at the University of Otago if you want to discuss further an offer you have received.

2. Know your Intellectual Property (IP) rights and responsibilities

At the University of Otago, thesis copyright is owned by *you*, the creator of the thesis (see Section 3 of the University of Otago [Intellectual Property Rights of Graduate Research Students Policy](#)ⁱ). As long as you are the sole copyright holder of the material in question, you are free to publish with the company if you wish to do so. However, note that the Policy also indicates that you must consider your IP responsibilities if you conducted the research in such a way that you have obligations to someone else (see Section 8 of the policy). Examples include:

- You received external funds to do your research.
- Your work was part of a larger University research project which had confidentiality obligations around publication.

Depending on the nature of such obligations you may not be able to publish your research or you may only be able to do so with the permission of the appropriate person or organisation. If you intend to be published by the company that has contacted you or anyone else, and are uncertain of your obligations, it is recommended that you contact your thesis supervisor for further advice.

3. The publishing company wishes to publish my thesis as it stands with no editing. Is this possible?

Yes it is possible but it's not a good idea. The problem with this approach is that a thesis is not usually written as a book for the general book market as such and so generally needs quite a bit of reshaping, cutting and editing before it can be called a book. One also usually needs appropriate professional editorial assistance in getting a book published. A good publishing company knows this and will assist you in this regard. Before making a decision to accept an offer to publish your thesis as is, you should discuss the matter with your thesis supervisor.

4. Is a book the best way to tell the world about my research?

Usually not, although there are exceptions. In the academic world, a better way of reaching your intended audience is normally by publishing shorter articles about your research in discipline-specific journals. It is best to talk with your thesis supervisor about this before making any decision.

5. What if I have already published my research?

If you have already published part of (or your entire thesis) in some other form then you must consider whether this affects your ability to have your thesis published by the company in question. For example, if you published a chapter of your thesis in an academic journal then you need to check the contract you signed at that time: does the contract allow you to republish the work or did the journal publisher claim exclusive rights to the material? If any part of your thesis has been published in another form then you must always check the terms and conditions that applied to that publication (including publication in OUR Archive, see below).

6. What you might want to do with your thesis in the future

If you agree to have your thesis published, read the publisher's contract carefully to ensure that you know which rights you retain - even after your thesis has been published. You may need to edit or amend the contract to retain the right to share a copy of your thesis with other researchers and/or make your thesis available as an educational resource?

7. What have others said about similar publishing offers that they have received

Other researchers have probably received similar publishing offers. The Chronicle of Higher Education [forums](#) ⁱⁱ is also a good place to read some discussions about the legitimacy of different publishers and their offers. If a particular publisher has not been discussed before then in this forum you have the option to start a new post and seek the advice of others.

8. Otago University Research (OUR) Archive

[OUR Archive](#) ⁱⁱⁱ could be a better way to share your thesis with other researchers and the rest of the world.

9. OUR Archive: Credibility

OUR Archive provides access to University of Otago research outputs, including theses, and has

been approved by Senate (principal academic authority of the University). In addition, locating your thesis in OUR Archive closely associates your work with other Otago research; your thesis will become part of the wider academic community at Otago and beyond. Other researchers encountering your thesis will clearly associate your thesis with the University of Otago.

10. OUR Archive: You retain your rights to publish

OUR Archive requires only a few administrative steps to (legally and technically) provide access to your thesis. As the author of your thesis you will retain copyright for your work, unless you conducted the research within your thesis under another agreement (see your [Intellectual Property \(IP\) rights](#)^{iv}). Depositing your thesis into OUR Archive does not prevent you publishing your thesis and, if required, your thesis can be removed from OUR Archive if a publishing agreement requires you to do so.

11. OUR Archive: Linking to your thesis that will remain stable

When you deposit your thesis into OUR Archive you will be provided with a permanent link to the thesis (known as a [Handle](#)^v). The University of Otago will maintain this link which can be used or stored in a variety of locations, including your portfolio, personal website and email signature.

Links

ⁱ University of Otago Intellectual Property Rights of Graduate Research Students Policy:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago003229.html>

ⁱⁱ The Chronicle of Higher Education forums: <http://chronicle.com/forums/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Otago University Research (OUR) Archive: <http://ourarchive.otago.ac.nz/>

^{iv} University of Otago Intellectual Property Rights of Graduate Research Students Policy:

<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago003229.html>

^v Definition of a Handle: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Handle_System



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