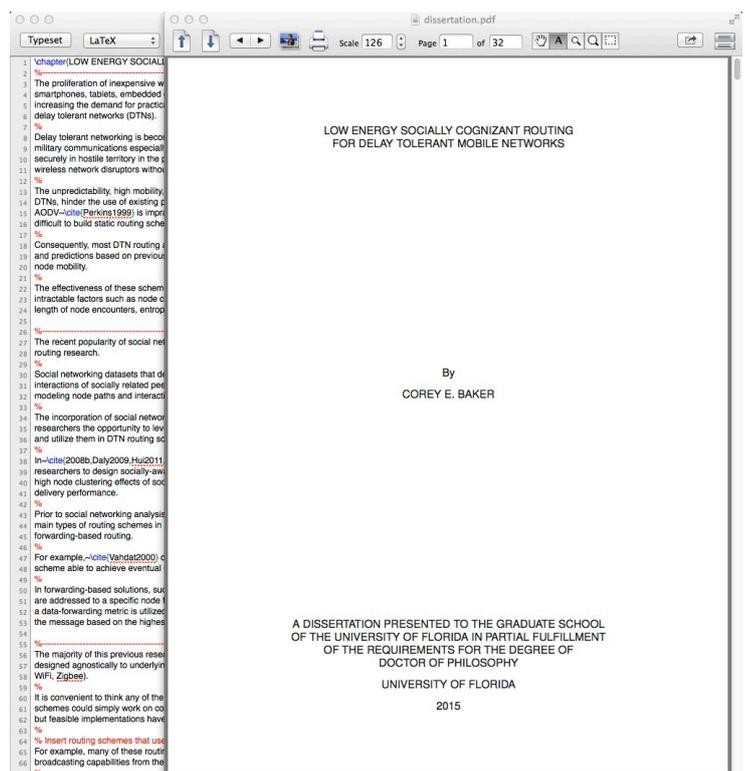


# Dissertation Advice

I sit, staring at my two computer screens, 32 pages into my dissertation, and think,

*“am I really making progress, or is this all just pretend?”.*

The answer to that question is, I really don't know. My Advisor is the only person who can weigh-in on my progress and it actually be meaningful. What I do know is I have a ton of graphs and extra results to add. I also have four paper topics in the queue that all need: coding, simulations run, and results assessed. So there's plenty to write about..



This brings me to providing some dissertation advice. **First, I will never pretend to be the know all to this whole PhD thing.** The rule of thumb is, whatever approach you are taking should be **something your Advisor is in full agreement with.** From what I have learned, there are three approaches:

1. Write your dissertation chapters and turn them into

publications

2. Write papers, publish them, and then put them as chapters in your dissertation
3. A hybrid of 1 and 2, at the end of the day all of your chapters don't have to be publications and vice versa

I choosing to go with number 2, and will resort to 3 if I have issues getting some of my papers accepted for publication. Note: some Advisors/Departments require a certain publication count for graduation.

The last thing I will mention is the application/template you should choose to write your dissertation/thesis in. There are typically two types of applications people use: Microsoft Word and LaTeX. You can usually find the template for your University by googling something like your University name and dissertation. For e.g. "uf dissertation template".

*Don't ever, ever, ever, ever use Microsoft Word for your dissertation/thesis!*

It is a nightmare and will most likely cost you hours/days/weeks of wasted time on formatting. The solution is LaTeX! If you are familiar with programming, you can pick up LaTeX pretty easily. If you don't how to do something in LaTeX, just google it. If you are not a coder, LaTeX is a great way to learn how to code and most LaTeX downloads come with other applications that simplify the coding process. You can also download "Lyx" which will allow you to edit the LaTeX template without any coding. The abilities of LaTeX are endless:

- The formatting is fully controlled by the template
- Automatic reference tracking and numbering for figures, tables, citations, etc.
- Full control and easy inputting of mathematical equations
- Full control of tables

- etc. etc. etc

Most LaTeX installs come with BibDesk, which allows you to keep all of your citations in one place. I recommend you download “JabRef” as it creates .bib files just like “BibDesk”, but it allows you to search for papers online via “google scholar” and other popular places such as “IEEE Xplorer”. This is extremely useful because it can populate all the citation information for each of your references for you, saving you tons of time and allowing you to focus on your dissertation/theses. Forgot to mention [LaTeX](#), [Lyx](#), [Bibdesk](#), and [JabRef](#) are all FREE! All applications are for Windows, Mac OSX, and Linux.

Watch a video I found on youtube about LaTeX vs. Word. The video is made by James Hayton PhD

Be sure to check back monthly for more RTPHD Blogs as well as others!

Disclaimer: This is a blog of my opinions, not facts to abide by. When it comes to any graduate school information/suggestions, you should always take bits of information from multiple sources and use them to form your own opinion. Always confirm everything with your Advisor. If your Advisor/Committee are not in agreement, then it’s not the right thing for YOU to do. They decide on your PhD, not me or anyone else.