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Plagiarism the Construct, the Research, the Response

Donna Gunter
University of North Carolina Charlotte

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Plagiarism: The Construction, The Research, The Response

Donna J. Gunter

**Coordinator, Information Literacy and
Instructional Services**

J. Murrey Atkins Library

UNC Charlotte

djgunter@email.uncc.edu

704-687-4941

Overview

- Turnitin as a typical university response to plagiarism
- Plagiarism—the research
- Turnitin—the research
- Conclusions and Recommendations

What Is In



turnitⁱⁿ

What Does Turnitin Claim To Do?



turnitin[®]

Reading, Writing, Research, & Originality

- Plagiarism Prevention
- Peer Review
- GradeMark
- GradeBook
- Only at Turnitin



Digital Assessment Suite



Plagiarism Prevention
Instantly identifies papers containing unoriginal material.



Peer Review
Students can review and respond to their classmates' work online.



GradeMark
The ability to mark student work in a unique, paperless environment.



GradeBook
A tool that enables instructors to manage grades and assignments online.

Success Stories

Grand Erie School District

Strengthening Honor Codes

See how Turnitin's flexibility and ease of use have helped individual schools within a larger district tailor use of Turnitin to meet their specific needs. [full story...](#)

More Success Stories...

Latest News

Turnitin.com: What Does It Claim?

Recognized worldwide as the standard in online ***plagiarism prevention***, Turnitin helps educators and students take full advantage of the internet's educational potential.

World's Best Solution

With a database of over 40 million student papers, Turnitin is the only technology capable of detecting purchased papers, cheat sites, and student collusion — over 50% of unoriginal work comes from other student papers.

What Does A Mass-Mailed Advertisement For Turnitin Claim?

“The internet is an invaluable tool—but it also gives some students an irresistible opportunity to plagiarize.’ It (the advertisement) then goes on to claim that many institutions use the Turnitin.com service to ‘solve the plagiarism problem and ensure academic integrity in the classroom’.”

Ritter, K. (2006) Buying in, selling short: A pedagogy against the rhetoric of online paper mills. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition and Culture* 6(1) 25-51.

What Does John Barrie Claim?

- He has promised to catch cheaters by “exposing every single word, phrase, paragraph and page that came from any other source.”

Righton, B. (2007, June 11). How not to catch a thief. *Maclean's* 120(22), 62-62.

- “In very short order, we’ll have it [plagiarism] all wrapped up. We’ll become the next generation’s spell checker.... There will be no room for anybody else, not even a Microsoft, to provide a similar kind of service because we will have the database” (Masur, 2001)

Royce, J. (2003, April). Has Turnitin.com got it all wrapped up? *Teacher Librarian*, 30(4), 26.

Plagiarism: What Does the Research Say?

Roig, M. (2001) Plagiarism and paraphrasing criteria of college and university professors. *Ethics & Behavior*, 11(3), 307-323.

Research Aim: To explore the hypothesis that professors from different disciplines have different criteria for paraphrasing and plagiarism.

Participants: 152 respondents from five academic institutions; 49 respondents from a discussion list of teachers of psychology.

- Study 1—Professors asked to determine whether 6 rewritten versions of a paragraph were plagiarism.
 - **Results: Moderate disagreement**
- Study 2—Different sample was asked to actually paraphrase same paragraph.
 - **Results: Up to 30% appropriated some text from original.**
- Study 3—Psychology professors paraphrased a paragraph that was either the original one or one that was easier to read.
 - **Results: 26% appropriated text from original paragraph; only 3% appropriated text from the easy paragraph.**

Roig's Conclusions

- Wide differences in paraphrasing practices of college professors, even within a single discipline.
- Participants at times committed “patchwriting” in their paraphrases.
- “Patchwriting” is acceptable in some disciplines and not in others.
 - Participants weren't provided background/context to paragraphs.
 - Participants were asked to paraphrase and not summarize paragraphs.

Sutherland-Smith, W. (2005) Pandora's box: academic perceptions of student plagiarism in writing. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 4, 83-95.

- Research Aim: To explore perceptions of plagiarism by 11 English for Academic Purposes teachers at an Australian university.
- Subject: Preparatory academic skills for 1st-year international students in the Faculty of Business and Law.
- Questionnaire/Interviews: Structured and semi-structured questions based on individual perceptions of plagiarism, definitions and teaching strategies to overcome plagiarism. All participants were asked the same questions.

Sutherland-Smith Results

- Intentional—9/11 teachers consider that lack of intentional wrongdoing by student \neq plagiarism. 2/11 participants maintain that all acts of plagiarism are, by definition, intentional.
- Unintentional—9/11 feel that intentional/non-intentional distinctions should be made in official policy.

Unintentional Advocates

- Students may be unfamiliar with the academic writing genre.
- Hawley (1984) contends that plagiarism is on a continuum from unintentional to intentional.
- Lea and Street (1999) concluded that many students found it difficult to identify their own ideas separately from sources.
- We could conclude that plagiarism, in part, is a writing issue and not so easily measured.

Intentional Advocates

- To say plagiarism is unintentional is a copout.
- Mirsky (2002) says that it is a “clear and present danger to intellectual liberty.”
- Angelil-Carter (2000) says it’s the “scourge of academic life.”

Detecting Plagiarism: Is It Worth It?

- Participants were divided about the morality and ethics of using plagiarism detection devices, such as Turnitin.
- Those who were opposed feel that it breaches a student's rights to the copyright of their own work because such devices keep a copy of those essays.
- 9/11 participants felt that their colleagues would view detection of plagiarism in their classrooms as a failure on their part.

- 5/11 felt that detection of student plagiarism may be interpreted as professional negligence and would discredit their own academic performance.
- 2/11 felt that plagiarism is the student's choice and does not reflect their teaching.
- 2/11 would feel comfortable officially reporting suspected plagiarism. The others would not.

- All participants reported the heavy work load involved in reporting plagiarism.
- One participant reported that an accused student accused her of poor teaching, and it was “off-putting” to her career.
- Most participants felt that the past experience of colleagues indicated the university committee would “let the students off.”
- One participant said that research was key to his promotion, not teaching, so he finds “no point” in pursuing the plagiarist.

Clegg, S. and A. Flint. (2006) More heat than light: Plagiarism in its appearing. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. 27(3) 373-387.

- Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead's (1995) survey of students' perceptions of cheating and self-reports indicate that more than 60% of students admitted to plagiarism and/or cheating.
- Joint Information System Council's Plagiarism Advisory Service indicates 25% of their sample admit to plagiarism.
- U. S. studies admit similar conflicts.

- Reliability of such studies must be questioned because of conflicting definitions of cheating and plagiarism.
 - Literature indicates a “feeling” that the issue/problem of plagiarism is increasing.
-

We could conclude that researchers find that plagiarism does happen, but conflicts in defining it and recognizing it are plentiful.

Dilemma

- We agree that plagiarism happens.
- We do not agree on the “appearance” of plagiarism.
- How do we remedy plagiarism?

Why Plagiarize?

- Ease of cut-and-paste from the Internet.
- Assumption that Internet sources do not need to be cited.
- Consumeristic notions of higher education
- Devaluing of some educational activities by students.

Why So Complex?

- Modern society values originality over convention.
- Some cultures still value convention over originality.
- Erosion of individual authorship.
- Increased value of collaborative authorship.

“Plagiarism is necessarily a chaotic conception, not a scientific one, and the trouble that the academic community is experiencing trying to gauge its incidence is, therefore, entirely predictable. The wide range of estimates will not be resolved by better measuring instruments—there is no ‘it’ to measure.”

--Sue Clegg and Abbi Flint

What Does Turnitin Do?

- Creates an “originality report” for each submitted paper.
- Matches the paper with its own database, which consists of:
 - Other submitted papers
 - Internet materials
 - Materials from proprietary databases

Turnitin: What Does The Research Say?

**Royce, J. (2003, April). Has Turnitin.com got it all wrapped up?
Teacher Librarian, 30(4), 26.**

- Robin Hill's study
 - 4 completely plagiarized essays were submitted.
 - Turnitin failed to find one essay and found only one of the two sources used to create the second essay.
 - Turnitin failed to find the third essay, but did find a number of false hits.

- Joint Information System Committee's study of British post-secondary institutions
 - Compared Turnitin with other detection services, using genuine essays and 11 essays from a variety of sources, including paper mills.
 - Turnitin performed best of services.

- J. Royce study

- Used a number of essays from various sources.
- No matches from discussion groups and lists
- No matches from online encyclopedias
- No matches from subscription databases
- Did not work well with paraphrases
- Did find matches for small contentless strings of words in completely irrelevant documents.
- Missed 15/18 plagiarized passages in one of the essays.

- Satterwhite and Gerein study
 - Bought a subscription to a detection service.
 - Used some free detection services.
 - They also used papers purchased from Internet paper mills.
 - They compiled their own plagiarized essays.
 - They also submitted genuine study essays.
 - Best results were from Turnitin, but they remain cautious, and did not recommend it to their universities.

Sutherland-Smith, W. & Carr, R. (n.d.)

Turnitin.com: Teachers' perspectives of anti-plagiarism software in raising issues of educational integrity. Journal of University Teaching and Learning Service.

- Research: Case study of seven teachers in five disciplines in an Australian university. Participants were questioned before their use of Turnitin.com, after they were trained on Turnitin.com, and for their final perceptions.

Results:

- Participants anticipated that Turnitin.com would solve the plagiarism “problem,” freeing up their time so that they would not have to pursue it.
- After they were trained, they realized Turnitin.com identifies text “matches;” still they felt it could be useful.
- Their final perceptions were actually advice and questions about how the database could be used for educational purposes rather than for punishment.

Some Technical Issues

- Turnitin seeks only one match—and stops.
- Turnitin picks up insignificant phrases and words.
- Does not know what to do with paraphrases.
- Does not identify false citations.
- Does not cover all subscription databases.
- Does not cover printed materials.
- Does not cover discussion groups, blogs, etc.
- A student can quote and cite accurately and still be accused of plagiarism because Turnitin may find a citation from a different source.

Some Ethical Issues

- John Barrie makes \$80 million in one year on a database that he largely builds from student intellectual property. The students get no recompense for their work.
- Possible copyright issues, though Barrie claims “Fair Use,” and he insures student anonymity so that he doesn’t violate FERPA.
- Barrie knows that most students do not have the resources to sue him.

An Offer You Can't Refuse?

Dear Instructor Gunter,

We are announcing a new grant program for writing program faculty and administrators in higher education to help educate other academics about the instructional uses of originality checking services like Turnitin.

We will make a limited number of grants to educators (or teams) to **underwrite the costs** of attending and presenting at the 2009 Conference on College Composition and Communication (March 11-14, 2009 in San Francisco, CA) on **topics related to the use of any Turnitin.com services** (including originality checking, online grading and peer reviewing) as instructional tools.

If you submit a proposal to the CCCC and that proposal is accepted, you may be selected to receive a grant from iParadigms to help underwrite your costs of attending the meeting and conducting your session. More details on this grant program will be announced soon.

“Turnitin does not find plagiarism. What it does is find sequences of words in submitted documents which match sequences of words in documents in its database, or sequences of words in documents on the Internet.” --J. Royce

Turnitin treats plagiarism as if it is an “it” to be measured rather than a chaotic construct to be discerned.

How Turnitin Can Be Used

- Can weed out most obvious cases.
- Can allow student to submit own paper w/o benefit of teacher and correct problems.

Beyond Turnitin: At The University Level

- Build a university culture of integrity that expects each classroom to promote an environment of integrity.
- Conduct faculty development in the issue of student authorship and integrity, both within departments, in colleges, and throughout the university.
- Faculty should be encouraged to officially report all suspected cases of plagiarism.
- Universities should provide support to faculty so they can have the time and resources to create a classroom culture of integrity and report cases of suspected plagiarism.
- Universities should support faculty when a student is suspected of plagiarism.

Beyond Turnitin: At The Classroom Level

- Each class should have an overt culture of integrity.
- References to university policy should be placed in syllabi.
- Plagiarism policy should be placed in syllabi and openly discussed.
- Create assignments that do not invite stock responses.
- Identify an audience and purpose for the assignment.
- Have students keep a research log.
- Have students make photocopies of sources.
- Have students write a reflection on the assignment after they turn it in.