

Motivating Originality:
Deterring Internet Plagiarism in a Wired World

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EDUC 501: AVLN Conference
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August 6, 2004

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Introduction

Today's wired students are living in a world awash with opportunities for the unscrupulous to shortcut their academic experience. Homework sites can give them answers to math problems; instant messaging allows students to relay test questions to their friends in the next session; camera phones can facilitate sneak previews of science experiment results; and the Internet is home to many "paper mills"—both free and paying—where students can quickly get an essay on just about any subject. Even legitimate Internet sites can also be used inappropriately by students. Fortunately, with a little creative thought, teachers can render the homework sites less useful, and banning cell phones, text messaging beepers, and other electronic devices (common practice in many schools) can deal with the other information "sharing" opportunities. The persistent problem, however, seems to be Internet plagiarism because of the seemingly limitless resources.

The good news is, though, that—just as the online environment provides students with many opportunities to plagiarize—so it can also provide teachers with powerful tools to deter this behavior. First, teachers can utilize the same electronic devices and can access the same online resources as their students can. Doing so periodically is beneficial; knowing the "competition" is usually a good idea. Then, by employing intentional teaching strategies, creating plagiarism-unfriendly assignments, and publicly adopting

electronic plagiarism-detection software, teachers can motivate tempted students to do their own thinking, write their own original papers, and think twice before plagiarizing.

I intentionally chose the title “Motivating Originality” and put “Deterring Internet Plagiarism” in the subtitle because looking at this situation proactively is much healthier than slipping into the Guess-who-I-just-caught-cheating? teacher-workroom conversations. Many teachers have participated in these conversations and have patted themselves on the back because they “caught that sneaky student.” Score: teacher-1, student-0. So, the teacher won round one (or two or three). More proactive, though, is creating situations in which students can see that doing the right thing is more rewarding and actually less work than surfing out on the Internet for a paper. Get out of the Who-can-I-catch-today? business by setting students up for success in the honesty department. Happily, the corollary of making it significantly more expedient for students to do their own thinking and creating is the valuable benefit of reducing non-Internet plagiarism, too.

This concept, that motivating students to do their own original thinking—and thus deterring plagiarism—is a much better option than playing detective once the sin has been committed, is built on six premises:

- First, I firmly believe that today’s students are NOT more dishonest than their predecessors of 50, or even 2000, years ago.
- Next, I believe that the majority of students do NOT cheat. (A Rutgers University study cited by Grinberg, 2004, found that “40 percent of students polled admitted they plagiarized at least once.” While 40% seems an

alarmingly high number, the good news is that this figure represents a minority, less than half.

- My third premise, shared by others, is that some students plagiarize inadvertently just because they do not understand what plagiarism is (Braumoeller & Gaines, 2001, Conclusions and Recommendations section; Roach, 2001, p. 101).
- Fourth, of those few others who do choose dishonesty, students are more likely to choose to cheat when they are rushed and/or feel under pressure—situations teachers can mitigate to a certain degree.
- The fifth premise is that teachers who are actively engaged in motivating originality and deterring plagiarism (rather than only plagiarism detection after the fact) create a much healthier and more positive environment for their students.
- Finally, teachers who pretend that the problem does not exist, or think that it does not happen in their classes, or believe that students who cheat are only hurting themselves, are fooling themselves and are missing the main goal of SDA Christian education, identified by Ellen G. White in 1903: “to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts” (p. 17).

SchoolSucks.com, *et al*

Surfing through Internet resources that are available to students who want to plagiarize can be an eye-opening and instructive experience. A prudent teacher familiarizes herself with the opposition, so to speak. A simple Google search for “school essays,” “custom essays,” “admissions essays,” “bible essays,” “science essays,” “health

essays,”—pick any subject—will yield thousands (or even millions) of sources. Many of the sites—both paying and free—are quite unabashed about their services.

CheatHouse.com brags that it has been, “leading the industry since 1995.”

SchoolSucks.com tells students, “Click [HERE](#) and your homework worries will

disappear.” To students feeling pressure of a deadline, ThePaperExperts.com says,

“Running out of time? Get any essay you need FAST!” Some, such as EssayFinder.com

even offer guarantees: “We GUARANTEE you will NOT find a better price for these

essays & research projects.” CyberEssays.com bills itself as “your one-stop source for

free, high-quality term papers, essays, and reports on all subjects.” FreePapers.net

includes U.S. History and world history papers, among others subjects. And just so Bible

teachers are not tempted to feel complacent, NetEssay.net offers “Thousands of Free

Religion Term Papers and Free Religion Essays.” For those looking for an essay,

resources are legion.

Even worse is that students who want to be assured of an “A” grade can have a custom paper written for them, tailored to the teacher’s specific assignment. The student just needs to have enough money and give the paper mill sufficient lead time to do the work. (Those needing an essay to be delivered in under three days pay more.) These papers are more likely to evade electronic detection devices, of course, because they are new, original creations. GenuineWriting.com promises that “all custom essays produced by our staff writers are 100% free of plagiarism—we control quality with a commercial plagiarism detection software package.” Their blurb almost makes one believe that what they are doing is actually honest! The only redeeming feature of sites such as this is that they require forethought—not common to casual plagiarists. (This small positive thought,

however, leads to the truly unsettling thought that there are students out there who are so determined to get good grades and so sure that they are not going to do their own work that they do actually plan ahead and contract with these firms.)

Some sources inappropriately utilized by students are marginally more ethical. EssayGirl.com (complete with a photograph of a teenage girl) offers “Essays: Over 25,000 of ‘em.” However, the site also warns,

All research papers are owned by The Paper Store Enterprises, Inc. . . . Our work is designed only to assist students in the preparation of their own work. Students who use our service are responsible not only for writing their own papers, but also for citing The Paper Store as a source when doing so.

The yellow- and black-striped shortcuts of yore: Cliffs Notes, available from bookstores, are now online at CliffsNotes.com. They have been joined by SparksNotes.com.

Shakespeare-online.com states that “full citation of any original material on this site is required . . .” (/siteinfo/copyright.html), but it, too, (and similar sites) can be used inappropriately by students.

Many, many Internet resources that students can use legitimately or otherwise, never intended to be academic shortcuts. Some public libraries offer homework help sites that really provide HELP for homework, not essays and other answers. The originators of online news sources (CNN.com, News.bbc.co.uk, washingtonpost.com, etc.), useful for current events assignments, probably never intended for their sites to help students get around doing their own work. And, online and CD-ROM encyclopedias are there to do just what their bound brethren do: be repositories of knowledge about the world. Subscription databases available at academic and many larger public libraries are

available to aid research, of course. A survey of online resources that students can use inappropriately would not be complete without mentioning these resources with completely honest intentions that can be used for less honest purposes. All teachers who assign writing would do well to spend an hour or two browsing through the various online resources. “Forewarned is forearmed,” as the saying goes. But teachers need not despair. Just because these things are there, does not mean that they are necessarily useful to students. This is where motivating originality comes in.

Teaching Strategies to Encourage Originality

Teachers can take a three-pronged approach to making plagiarism less likely in their classrooms. They can actively motivate originality, create assignments and assignment parameters that deter plagiarism, and—when these two have not been completely successful—follow through by detecting and documenting plagiarism in a number of different ways, electronic and otherwise.

Motivating originality should be intentional throughout the course or school year, in all assignments, and at all stages of long assignments. Teachers need to clearly articulate their expectations of original work: “I’m interested in your thoughts on this dilemma. How would you solve this situation?” “What do you think about the choice this character made? Would you have made the same choice?” Being respectful of student’s thoughts conveys the idea that the teacher values originality. Certain questions are more likely to promote original thought, too. Jamie McKenzie (1997) identifies three “prime questions”: Why? [or better yet, Why not? (1998, Antidote 2 section)], How?, and Which is best? (Which Questions Matter? section) as questions that are more likely to generate original thought than What? When? and Where?—questions that require only

“information gathering at its crudest and simplest level” (McKenzie, 1998, Level One Research section) McKenzie (1998) says that teachers can “transform topical research into projects which demand that students move past mere gathering of information to the construction of new meaning and insights” (Antidote 2 section). Moving from “Write a paper about Thomas Edison” to “Write a paper explaining which of Mr. Edison’s inventions has had the greatest impact on you and your family” requires students to analyze and justify rather than merely spout facts quickly gleaned (or copied wholesale) from another school’s class project website on Edison. This is requiring higher-order thinking.

While students are gathering resources to substantiate the original ideas they have generated, teachers can encourage them to identify their own original thoughts visually. McKenzie (1998) suggests writing original thoughts in green ink. This allows a student to see graphic positive reinforcement of his own original thoughts: black or blue ink for others thoughts and green for mine (Antidote 6 section). By intentionally promoting originality, teachers can create a climate in their classrooms that promotes learning and minimizes the temptation to plagiarize.

Not only can teachers intentionally promote originality, but they can also actively deter plagiarism by teaching in ways that make plagiarism less useful, less rewarding. Start by making sure that students know the difference between original work and plagiarism. Ferguson (2004) reminds teachers that “students may not intend to plagiarize but might simply be unaware or misinformed.” They “may be unfamiliar with citation styles” or “may lack appropriate research and writing skills. Students may also be confused about issues surrounding copyright and plagiarism” (Understand Why Students

Plagiarize section). The website of Turnitin.com, the preeminent plagiarism detection software (more below), reminds “educators and students” “that the best means for preventing plagiarism is preemptive education” (Turnitin.com Research Resources). Educate students about what plagiarism is. Teachers should not assume that students had this training “last year” or “in elementary school.” If students have been assigned the Write-a-paper-about-solar-energy kind of essay previously and earned A’s for writing cribbed directly from the encyclopedia, they may not have a clear idea about what is acceptable use of sources and what constitutes plagiarism. Thus, to be fair, each teacher needs to clearly spell out what constitutes plagiarism in his/her classroom and how to avoid it. Burwell and York (n.d.) say teachers should define plagiarism orally and in writing (Sculpting the Learning Environment section).

And, yes, teachers need to explain why plagiarism is wrong and its implications in their classes. Explain that plagiarism, as Turnitin.com Research Resources states, “is an act of fraud. It involves both stealing another’s intellectual property, and lying about it afterwards, claiming the paper as one’s own.” Students have probably heard that plagiarism hurts the student who engages in it because s/he cheats her/himself out of an educational experience. Probably not very many students, however, have thought about the fact that “plagiarism also victimizes those classmates who have legitimately earned their grades and degrees, and who will be competing with the plagiarizer for school admissions and jobs” (Guidelines for Plagiarism Prevention section) . Clearly state, orally and in writing, the consequences of plagiarism, too. Formal school or department plagiarism policies should be in all syllabi and, perhaps, included with major assignments

(Burwell and York, n.d., *Sculpting the Learning Environment* section). Defining plagiarism means that students are less likely to do it inadvertently.

A few good-practice teaching strategies can assist, too. It should go without saying, of course, that new essay topics each time a class is taught will reduce the chances of seeing an older sibling's or a neighbor's paper reincarnated into a current student's offering. Burwell and York (n.d.) mention the importance of clearly articulated, pre-established grading criteria (with a printed out grading rubric) in a plagiarism-unfriendly classroom (*Sculpting the Learning Environment* section). The teacher's approach to grading assignments can be a deterrent, too. Burwell and York (n.d.) suggest that teachers "refuse to grade or give credit to any paper in which the student has suddenly changed topics" (*Grading* section). The situation that this rule of thumb is designed to combat is familiar to most writing teachers: a non-performing student who has missed several in-progress deadlines suddenly turns up at the last minute with a completely formed essay—on a topic very different from that which he stated he was going to write on at the beginning of the process. Telling students upfront that these essays will simply not be graded can let students know right away that the teacher understands this situation and does not want students to be tempted to try it.

During the process of creating long writing assignments, teachers can help forestall plagiarism by requiring students to submit stages and by being involved during the process. Collect the note cards, the thesis statement, the outline, a sample paragraph, three body paragraphs of a research paper, etc., as the assignment rumbles along (Burwell & York, n.d., *Plagiarism-Proof Assignments* section). Respond to this work during the process. Give students feedback on their original ideas. Conferencing with young writers

can be a significant way to encourage students to have their own thoughts and be able to articulate them, too. Requiring students to keep a journal/log of the writing process—AS they are going through the process—is another good way to make plagiarism a lot of extra, hard work. Creating a log for a paper one did not write is challenging—as is creating note cards, an outline, and early draft paragraphs for a paper mill essay. Requiring significantly altered drafts—as a result of conferences or other feedback from the teacher—also encourages originality (Burwell & York, n.d., Plagiarism-Proof Assignments section).

Another effective strategy is to provide many opportunities to demonstrate good work. This means that each individual assignment has less of an impact on a student's total grade. A huge research paper on which 50% of the semester's grade hangs is an assignment inviting last minute panicking . . . and plagiarism. Students may be able to gain the same benefit from writing two or three smaller projects, and they get the added benefit of being able to write the subsequent papers after the teacher has had a chance to grade, comment upon, and hand back the previous paper.

Finally, but not least important, teachers who are consciously motivating originality will make efforts to connect positively with students on a personal level, in a positive, supportive way. According to Burwell and York (n.d.), “students are more likely to cheat when they are anonymous units in large groups to which they have little or no personal connection.” Teachers need to “invent ways to get to know [their] students.” Also, in an effort to keep things positive, teachers aiming for a plagiarism-free classroom should not “harp at [their] students about plagiarism and cheating! Being treated as if one is dishonest actually makes many people behave dishonestly” (Sculpting the Learning

Environment section). Teaching strategies that deter plagiarism can be coupled with assignment types that make borrowing another person's ideas less useful in order to move closer to the goal of a plagiarism-free classroom.

Types of Assignments That Deter Plagiarism

Plagiarism-savvy teachers can require activities and projects that makes cheating more work than original thinking. Certain kinds of assignments simply make plagiarism more difficult and, consequently, less expedient. Assignments that are "specific to [a] particular course" make Internet plagiarism much more challenging (Burwell & York, n.d., Plagiarism-Proof Assignments section). Examples include trip journals, experiment logs, and summaries of a group's thought experiment. "Strange bedfellow" essays are those comparing/contrasting two very different things. Burwell and York (n.d.) give as an example, "'Compare Orwell's 1984 and the Bush White House website'." An essay comparing a work of literature to a unique aspect of school, a student's life, or a current political situation will be more difficult to find on the Internet than a straightforward essay simply on the work of literature itself.

Real-life assignments and assignments based on personal experience are usually easier to create than to find elsewhere. Business students can create a business plan for a real, local small business and go over it with a volunteer banker. Students can write PR releases detailing a recent community service project or an upcoming school program. Assignments based on personal experience, with careful coaching, can turn into opportunities for significant analysis and reflection of ones own choices. Respect for students' privacy must be built into assignments of this nature, but the opportunities

across school subjects are many, and they double as unique learning experiences and assignments that make plagiarism unrewarding.

Research papers are often thought of as likely targets for less scrupulous students. However, several assignment features make “borrowing” someone else’s essay more work than writing ones own essay. Research papers with “detailed components” and staggered deadlines deter plagiarism (Ferguson, 2004, Design Plagiarism-Resistant Assignments section). Finding an Internet essay and then working backwards to create the features due for the in-progress deadlines and tweaking a research paper to make parts of it fit the components specified in the grading rubric require more work that writing a paper the honest way. And, as Jones and Harmon (2002) remind teachers, “most people who plagiarize don’t do it because they want to work *harder*” (p. 24). Another way to promote an intimate knowledge of the sources utilized in a research paper is to require an annotated bibliography of those sources (Ferguson, 2004). Burwell and York (n.d.) suggest requiring this “before [the students] write the first draft of their papers (Plagiarism-Proof Assignments section). Not only is creating an annotated bibliography good preparation for future academic work, it also requires students to have actually read their sources (Turnitin.com Research Resources, Guidelines for Plagiarism Prevention section).

Teachers can make specifications about the sources students can use for their research papers that will make original work more expedient that surfing for an Internet paper. Say Burwell and York (n.d.), students can be told to use only sources on a provided list or of specific types (ex: five book sources and only two online sources). Specifically excluding sources not already utilized in class makes digging into

appropriate sources more expedient than plagiarism (Plagiarism-Proof Assignments section). Students can be told to use only sources printed since YYYY. (The year is the teacher's choice—depending on local resources available, the assignment, and the grade level of the students.) Using relatively recent sources eliminates some paper mill essays as options because many have been in circulation for almost ten years (Turnitin.com Research Resources, Guidelines for Plagiarism Prevention section). Remember, CheatHouse.com has been “leading the industry since 1995.” Ferguson (2004) says that using sources published “within the previous year outdates most paper mill offerings” (Design Plagiarism-Resistant Assignments section). Teachers can specify that students must submit printouts or photocopies of all sources when they submit their final drafts. This assignment feature creates a rigorous task for a student who has appropriated an essay from the Internet. Specifying requirements for sources sends a clear signal to students that original work and thought are expected and that any old essay from an Internet paper mill will NOT fulfill the criteria of the assignment.

Non-writing assignments that demonstrate similar knowledge can be effective tools, also, to deter plagiarism. Collections, oral presentations, and other performance assignments make cheating a less attractive option. Being asked to give a public presentation during which questions from the audience are encouraged provides motivation for students to make sure they know their subject and sources and have not just surfed the Internet for a paper on the topic to read aloud (Turnitin.com Research Resources, Guidelines for Plagiarism Prevention section). Interdisciplinary and/or multi-mode assignments make original work easier. A student could bake a cake similar to one in a nineteenth-century novel, using a nineteenth-century recipe, and write about the

research he had to do to arrive at the successful result. With a bit of creativity and forethought, teachers can devise assignments that maximize learning AND make plagiarism a much less attractive options.

Detecting plagiarism

If teaching strategies and assignments to motivate originality and deter plagiarism seem to have failed, next the teacher has to become a detective. This is the third approach necessary to make plagiarism less likely in a classroom. Sleuthing for plagiarism is not a role that many teachers relish. Not only is finding evidence of plagiarism antithetical to the nurturing goals of most teachers, it is often time consuming. However, confrontations with the student (and, possibly, the parents) about the inappropriate behavior are usually much easier if the teacher can present evidence of the inappropriate copying. So, being able to prove plagiarism is critical. Documentation is a must, of course, if the behavior is to be reported and become part of a student's academic record—as policy requires in many institutions.

Teachers with a good sense of their students' writing "voices" have a better chance of spotting writing that is out of character for a specific student and therefore open to suspicion. Burwell & York (n.d.) suggest collecting an in-class sample of students' writing during "the first week of class." This could prove to be a helpful artifact should a teacher ever have to move into detection mode (Sculpting the Learning Environment section). Writing that departs dramatically in style from the file copy of the student's work should raise a red flag.

Sometimes a teacher is not really sure what about a piece of writing raises suspicion. In this case, looking for telltale signs of plagiarism becomes the next task. A

sleuthing teacher can employ strategies that have served others well for centuries before computers appeared on the scene. Does the writer's voice sound like the "voice" in the student's sample writing done at the beginning of the course? Teachers can also "look for vocabulary not commonly used in this particular class," or examine "the citations included. Are they all from sources not available in [the] library or from another country? Are they outdated?" (Preventing and Detecting Plagiarism, 2004) Are there "anachronistic references (e.g. 'Reagan, who is currently president...')?" (Pyatt, 2004, Detection section). Even poor punctuation can be a clue. Truss (2003) records that "misplaced commas" helped a Cambridge University lecturer spot the politically embarrassing plagiarism in a 2003 British Government dossier on Iraq "of a twelve-year-old thesis by an American doctoral student" (p. 202).

If the traditional methods are not successful, the Internet and computers provide sleuthing methods that were unavailable to teachers of even twenty years ago. A simple search is often a useful place to begin. "Preventing and Detecting Plagiarism" (2004) from the Staley Library of Millikin University in Decatur, IL, identifies several search strategies that teachers can employ online to gather evidence of plagiarism:

- "Use search engines. Entering a four to eight word, distinctive phrase in a full text search engine will often yield the source of the plagiarism. Be sure to use the proper search techniques for locating phrases. . . .
- "Search any of the full text databases [available through subscribing libraries] (Identifying Plagiarized Papers section)

If students have created an essay containing plagiarism on a computer, there may be some telltale signs. Teachers can look for “statements at the end of the paper that acknowledge a source for the paper” and “unusual formatting, either a change in fonts or the formatting itself” (Preventing and Detecting Plagiarism, 2004, Identifying Plagiarized Papers section). Pyatt (2004) specifies a telltale formatting change: “mixtures of straight quote marks and curly (Smart Quote) marks” and suggests looking for evidence that the paper is “printed off the Internet with *Netscape* or *Internet Explorer*” (Detection section). These clues might be URLs and/or dates at the top or bottom of pages, and even such blatant clues as the “for more examples of neolithic houses, please click here” discovered by a University of Wales lecturer in an otherwise impressive essay and reported by Nic Fleming (2004). Plagiarizers who do not proofread very carefully might leave in a “web site address (e.g. www.cheathouse.com) in the text” (Pyatt, Detection section). Not all plagiarizing students make their teachers’ jobs so easy, though.

If sifting through the paper for clues does not yield evidence that supports a teacher’s suspicion and the teacher is still reasonably sure that the work is not original to the student, asking “the student to recreate portions of the paper and see how closely this matches the syntax and sentence structure included in the paper in question” might just yield the evidence needed—to exonerate or charge the writer (Preventing and Detecting Plagiarism, Identifying Plagiarized Papers section). A suspicious teacher could also ask the student to take him to the library and point out the sources she incorporated (D. Richards, personal communication, May 1981) or browse the Internet on the teacher’s office computer and find the websites used in the paper. Searching for evidence is not pleasant work, but necessary. If a teacher does discover evidence sufficient to accuse a

student, following through with a confrontation, the announced consequences, and a report is an important part of helping students learn about the consequences of their choices and actions—with the hope that the student will not yield to a similar temptation in the future.

Electronic Detection and Documentation of Plagiarism

Recent developments in plagiarism detection software and its subsequent enthusiastic adoption by many educational institutions have made the use of computer-aided plagiarism detection less laborious and even more effective at catching cheats. Say Braumoeller and Gaines (2001), “the digital revolution has . . . created a niche for fast and (at least somewhat) reliable plagiarism-detection software” (Introduction section).

Interestingly enough, even students are impressed by the use of plagiarism detection software. Braumoeller and Gaines (2001) discovered that “a stern, verbal warning against plagiarism when handing out the assignment” did not have the same effect as the information that the students’ essays would be analyzed by EVE (Essay Verification Engine), a plagiarism detection program (Procedure section).

Overall, we found that while a few students engage in intentional academic dishonesty, far more were unclear on the rules against plagiarism, but paradoxically, had received enough lectures on it that they simply ‘tuned out’ any warnings. The challenge for the educator is to deter the first group and to motivate the second to pay closer attention. Plagiarism-detection software seemed to serve both functions quite well. (Braumoeller & Gaines, 2001, Conclusions and Recommendations section)

This might seem to suggest that students believe software is better at detecting plagiarism than teachers are!

The software employed in the above study (EVE) is just one of many programs available. Some of the better known detection aids include:

- Turnitin.com (They have also developed helpful plagiarism prevention resources available at plagiarism.org.)
- Glatt Plagiarism Services (<http://plagiarism.com>)
- EVE2 (<http://www.canexus.com/eve/>)
- “Moss (for a Measure Of Software Similarity) is an automatic system for determining the similarity of C, C++, Java, Pascal, Ada, ML, Lisp, or Scheme programs” (<http://www.cs.berkeley.edu/~aiken/moss.html>).
- CopyCatch Gold (<http://www.copycatchgold.com/>)
- Wcopyfind (<http://plagiarism.phys.virginia.edu/Wsoftware.html>)

A simple Google search for “free plagiarism detection software” will yield a longer list. It is worth noting, though, that at least one university library offers a warning to professors: “Certain ‘free’ detection services and websites have been found to share an IP address with paper mill sites. Such a guise may be one way that paper mills expand their paper-product offerings” (Ferguson, 2004, Warnings section).

The leader in the field is Turnitin.com. Described as having “perhaps the highest rate of detection among subscription software, Turnitin searches not only a large portion of the web, but also a number of full-text proprietary databases” (Ferguson, 2004, Detection Software and Services section). According to their own home page, Turnitin is “used by thousands of institutions in over fifty countries” (Turnitin.com). They average

“one new user every twenty seconds (/static/about_us/users.html), and receive “over 20,000 papers per day” “during peak usage” (/static/about_us/). This is one situation in which a monopoly may not be all bad. Certainly subscribers to Turnitin’s services do get the most comprehensive comparative search available.

But even Turnitin is not without flaws; teachers still have to use their brains. Turnitin cannot compare student papers to every piece of writing in existence. Older sources are unlikely to be in their databases. Brand new paper mill websites may not have been found by their computers. And, of course, Turnitin will not be able to detect that a paper is a fresh, custom creation of a service that guarantees to write a new paper for each student willing to pay for its services. But Turnitin can make a teacher’s job easier. (See the Turnitin.com originality report for this research paper attached at the end.)

Of course, such handy-dandy detection devices are not going to make everyone delighted. Most objections are directed at Turnitin.com as the leader of the pack. In January 2004, CNN.com reported that “the senate committee at McGill University in Montreal sided . . . with sophomore Jesse Rosenfeld, who argued that he should not be required to submit his essays to Turnitin.com.” Said Rosenfeld, “I was having to prove I didn’t plagiarize even before my paper was looked at by my professor’.” Some student organizations are not delighted, either. “The Canadian Federation of Students recently took up a policy position against it,” objecting that they were not consulted before the program’s adoption. Some people allege that organizations such as Turnitin.com are making money from students’ work—without their permission. A few institutions have decided against adopting Turnitin.com because of these issues (Grinberg, 2004).

Turnitin.com, “insists it is in compliance with all related copyright laws.” These kinds of

“accusations are groundless and made without due diligence,” says John Barrie, Turnitin.com’s founder and president (qtd. in Grinberg, 2004). Many educational institutions obviously do not see legal problems here, either.

Just as going through security at the airport is supposed to deter would be criminals, so, as Braumoeller and Gaines noted, telling students that papers will be analyzed by plagiarism-detection software serves as a deterrent (Introduction section). Definitely, students should be told upfront if detection software will be used (Pyatt, Copyright Caveat & Detection Software sections). Deterring plagiarism is much more positive (and less time-consuming) than detecting it after the sin has occurred, remember? In fact, students can do the actual submissions themselves. As they submit their papers, not only are they, in effect, giving their permission for their paper to join the Turnitin.com databases, but they are more likely to be fully cognizant of what is going to happen to their papers: that they will be analyzed and compared to millions of other documents to assure originality.

Conclusion

Humans are basically lazy animals. Students do not like doing any more work than they absolutely have to. They will look for shortcuts—especially when they feel overwhelmed. And, (surprise, surprise) teachers are also human. Teachers do not like to go to the extra effort required to plagiarism-protect courses. It is just easier to tell students they should not plagiarize, go about the business of teaching as usual (same old methods, same old assignments), and lull themselves to sleep with the thought that a cheating student is only hurting him/herself.

But by adopting this attitude, sometimes expressed rather sanctimoniously, teachers are in danger of neglecting their calling. The call to teach includes a mission to nurture students as they develop, assist in the task of character development, and prepare them to function as model citizens as adults. Motivating originality is just part of this important process.

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