



The Internet and Classroom Plagiarism: Detecting the Problem

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Abstract

While the Internet offers many facilities for enriching the marketing classroom, it also facilitates plagiarism among students. However, there are now various for fee and for free services on the Internet that help the college professor detect the copy and paste scholar. This article discusses the extent of plagiarism on the college campus and introduces the reader to available plagiarism detection services.

Introduction

Even a cursory review of academic and business literature reflects widespread theft of ideas by students (Adams 2000; Lathrop and Foss 2000; O'Brien 2000; Fialkoff 1993; and Bugeja 2000). Georgetown, the University of Virginia, Florida State, the University of Maryland, Cornell, and UC-Berkeley, among others, have all reported growing concerns over the use of the Internet to plagiarize course assignments (Diependrock 2002; Fry 2002; Kang 2002; Sessa 2002; Simmons 2001; Townsend and Friedman 2002; and Walzer 2002). Duke's Center for Academic Integrity reports that 70% of college students say that they have cheated (Chard 2002). A survey of nearly 700 students at nine colleges found that students who admitted to copying from the Internet without proper citation sometimes to very frequently numbered about 29% of the sample (Scanlon and Neumann 2002). In that study, 11% of the students admitted to submitting an entire paper without citation either sometimes to very frequently. Young (2001) summarizes a study by the Center for Academic Integrity in 1999 where nearly 70 percent of professors reported one or more instances of plagiarism each year.

It is not always the incompetent student who plagiarizes. A 1998 survey by the publisher of Who's Who Among American High School Students of the top 5% of all American high school students reported that, "13% plagiarized part of an essay and 53% cheated because it didn't seem like a big deal"

(Lathrop and Foss 2000). Miguel Roig has reported that there have been instances of ignorance or confusion by students concerning acceptable academic practices (Roig 1999).

In fact, proper citation methods for Internet articles and articles from online databases have only recently been established by style manuals. It is indeed possible that many students who commit plagiarism do so because they do not understand the situations that call for the citation of sources, especially for materials obtained through the Internet (Hall 2002). "A typical attitude I hear from high-school students is, 'If it's on the Internet, it's public knowledge, and I don't have to cite it,'" says McCabe, who has studied Internet use and plagiarism among high school students and notes that many of these students will soon arrive at colleges (Young 2001). Branigan (2001) concludes that McCabe's research into plagiarism in the public schools confirms that the Internet facilitates plagiarism. McCabe's research with high school students indicates that college and university faculty may soon see more changes in student perceptions regarding the issue of plagiarism (Lathrop and Foss 2000). It is perhaps even more frustrating for faculty trying to deal with plagiarism in the classroom to realize that the acceptance of cheating among students is as widespread as its incidence (Desruisseaux 1999).

Techniques to Detect Plagiarism

Employing plagiarism detection services is the most efficient method for finding material copied from the World Wide Web. Although these services may not include everything offered on the Web, they can find much of what is available to the plagiarizer. This method of plagiarism detection can save time, but comes at a price. Pricing structures vary. [EVE2](#) sells individual licenses to faculty for about \$20.00. The cost of site licenses from [Turnitin.com](#) depends on the type of school and the number of students.

Legal issues concerning students' rights should be considered when using a plagiarism detection service such as Turnitin.com that stores submitted papers in a database. When new papers are submitted to Turnitin.com, they are checked against those already in the company's database. Unless students are informed of this policy and give written permission beforehand, this could lead to violation of a student's rights under FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (Fraser 2002). FERPA requires written permission from a student before personal information is distributed (Fraser 2002). Additionally, violation of a student's copyright on the paper also comes into play if the student has not given permission for the paper to be stored in the database (Fraser 2002).

Web Search Engines and Meta-searchers

Searching the Web with search engines or meta-searchers is an effective, low-cost method for detecting plagiarism. Using the search engines [Google](#), [Altavista](#), or [HotBot](#) may produce immediate results. However, each of these search engines only covers a portion of the Web, so you may need to try more than one of them. A better approach is to use the Web metasearcher [Dogpile](#). Dogpile scans the Web using various search engines. To search, select a distinctive phrase that you suspect the student did not write. Check the help screens to determine whether you should use quotation marks or some other symbol to search for the phrase. Choose a distinctive line from Figure one (a piece of obvious plagiarism created for this paper) and see if you can find the source of the information.

While Dogpile did not produce a reference to the 2002 Annual Report of [Coca-Cola](#), Google, Altavista, and HotBot all recovered the original source. Hotbot also pulled up a paper, apparently written by a university student, on Coca-Cola that included its mission statement and strategic goals. This search was performed on September 4, 2003.

Figure One. Hypothetical Plagiarism in a Marketing Report on Coca-Cola

I would say that Coke needs to address six strategic priorities in the coming years: accelerate carbonated soft-drink growth; selectively broaden our family of beverage brands to drive profitable growth; grow system profitability and capability together with our bottling partners; serve customers with creativity and consistency to generate growth across all channels; direct investments to highest-potential areas across markets; and drive efficiency and cost effectiveness everywhere. Coke is one of the largest competitors in the world in carbonated and noncarbonated beverages. As such they have begun sponsorship of the FIFA World Cup as well as past sponsorships of the Olympic Games. But these six priorities must be met if Coke is to maintain its leadership in the world beverage market.

Online Book Reviews

The Web is an excellent source for full-text book reviews. The online bookstores Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble provide publisher and reader reviews of books. Some of these reviews are well written and lengthy. Rather than searching the sites individually, begin with AllBookstores.com or BookFinder.com, which link to online bookstores selling a specific book. [Book Spot](http://BookSpot), an online database that links to magazines, newspapers, and other book review Web sites, is another valuable tool for finding reviews. If you assign specific books for your students to review, start a collection of reviews on these books from a variety of sources. For example, if you assigned a review of Daniel Litvin's *Empires of Profit*, you might receive the book review reproduced in Figure Two.

Figure Two. Hypothetical Plagiarism in a Book Review

The book I have chosen to report on is *Empires of Profit* by Daniel Litvin. At the start of *Empires of Profit*, Daniel Litvin writes that he is aware of no similar treatment of his topic. That is an unlikely claim for a book about globalisation. How many books have been published on this subject? Yet Mr. Litvin's approach is indeed novel. He looks at the difficulties thrown up by globalisation not just as they present themselves today but as they have been experienced since the time of the East India Company. He is concerned not with the costs and benefits of economic integration but with the way political and cultural dimensions of globalisation test the managers of multinational companies. And he looks not at the history of any one company but at a series of episodes, each involving a different entity at a different time.

While the sites listed above will lead you to reviews of books that you can print and file before assigning reviews, you will need to use the search engines to find the original review. For this review, Google and Altavista failed to retrieve the original source, but Dogpile located the original review (although it did appear fifth in the search match list). This search was performed on September 4, 2003 (Crook 2003).

Internet Paper Mills

Considering the number of online paper mills available on the Web, a thriving market for plagiarism exists. The lengthy list of Internet [paper mills](#) compiled by Margaret Fain and Peggy Bates, both librarians at Coastal Carolina University, illustrates the extent of this problem. Online paper mills provide essays, term papers, and other materials free, in exchange for another paper, or for fees that can range from \$1.00 to \$10.00 per page (Fain and Bates 2001). The papers offered by mills vary in length, quality, currency, and inclusion of references. Students usually receive these papers by mail, e-mail or fax and can even order a custom written paper (Fain and Bates 2001). While some of the sites include notices about copyright and plagiarism, dishonest students are not likely to heed these warnings.

Papers ordered from a mill can be more difficult to track since the full text of these papers may not be available free on the Web. Some of the pay mills provide summaries of papers that can offer clues as to whether they are the source of a student's work. A search in a Web metasearcher or search engine using the words "term paper" or "research paper" along with words that describe a student's topic may lead you to a promising paper. Figure three presents a sampling of titles from one paper mill when the marketing area was searched.

Full-Text Databases

College and university libraries offer access to an array of electronic databases with the full text of SEC filings, books, book reviews, and articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers. The best method for finding materials in full-text databases is to select a distinctive phrase, place it in quotation marks, and search in the full text databases. If your students are doing annotated bibliography assignments, also check the abstracts of articles in databases. Become familiar with the databases in your discipline and related disciplines accessible from your campus library. Also, do not overlook general databases that provide articles on a wide range of subjects, such as EBSCO's Academic Search Premier.

Figure Three. Sample Paper Mill Titles.

Marketing As The Satisfaction Of The Desires Of Users Of Goods And Services

Examines marketing's purpose, methods, economics, consumer patterns and role in business. Written in 1978, 13 pages, 15 notes, 6 sources, \$116.35

Marketing Segmentation

Examines marketing techniques relative to buyer characteristics and consumption patterns. Written in 1978, 8 pages, 2 notes, 5 sources, \$71.60

Salesmen: Consumer Vs. Industrial Goods

Compare attitude, selling technique, demographic data and behavioral differences involved in reaching specific markets. Written in 1978, 30 pages, 13 notes, 5 sources, \$268.50

The Nature Of Marketing Management Or Mass Communication

Depicts the relationship between the technological society and mass systems and role of the media. Written in 1978, 4 pages, 4 notes, 4 sources, \$35.80

Retrieved from A1-termpaper.com on September 4, 2003.

Full-text article databases are also accessible with no restrictions on the Web. [Find Articles](#), a project of Gale Group and Look Smart, "contains articles dating back to 1998 from more than 300 magazines and journals" (Find Articles). The Business & Finance category lists about 157 magazines, trade journals, and scholarly journals including Airline Industry Information, Automotive Marketing, Brandweek, Chemical Market Reporter, DSN Retailing Today, Industry Week, Hotels, J Marketing, and Marketing Week (Find Articles). [MagPortal.com](#), a second free Web database, offers the full text of articles from Asiaweek, Banking Strategies, Emerging Business, Financial Services Marketing, Technology Marketing, and other business related magazines. The marketing and sales subcategory contained about 75 current articles with a database of 1143 old articles in September of 2003.

Conclusion

This article presented the extent to which the Internet facilitates plagiarism by the ignorant or lazy student. It also examined several approaches to the detection of such plagiarism. While some time would be required to use these methods, and in the case of the fee services some consideration must be given to the student's right to privacy, the authors maintain that these techniques provide a relatively quick way to confirm suspected plagiarism.

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