Avoiding plagiarism –
what can librarians do?

European Network
for Academic
Integrity

Source: University of Konstanz

Who are we?

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Sources and references

Project „Re*fair*ence" for plagiarism prevention

https://www.plagiatspraevention.uni-konstanz.de/en

European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI)

www.academicintegrity.eu

Agenda

1. Why should libraries busy themselves with plagiarism prevention?
2. Your questions
3. Strategy and challenges for libraries
4. Education and learning materials (not only) for librarians
5. Use of (so-called) plagiarism detection software
6. Take away message

Why libraries?

Please discuss in small groups (ca. 4-5 people):

1. What is the problem with plagiarism?

2. Why should librarians bother?

3. What is your most important **question** concerning how to avoid plagiarism?

We will collect your questions.

Collecting your questions

Strategy: Principles of successful prevention of plagiarism

- Topic has high relevance for science, higher education, society, working environments.

- Plagiarism is strongly linked to researching knowledge, reading and writing.

- Libraries are already actively helping to avoid plagiarism.

Strategy: Principles of successful prevention of plagiarism

- Action instead of only re-action.

- Start talking and be integrative (all groups and stakeholders).

- Stay positive.

- Prevention first, detection second.

- It's about the word (content), not only the words.

- Expect emotional responses.

Special challenges for librarians

- How do we deal with plagiarism in our collection?

- How do we make e. g. final theses available (electronically, open access)?

- How can we support imbedding good practices and their training within the departments and in the regular curricula?

- What is the role and strategic positioning of the library within the university?

Examples of frequent questions at the help desk

- From how many words taken from a source do I have to quote?

- Is there any software to check if I quoted correctly?

- Oh, I must also provide images with a reference?

- I am afraid that I accidentally plagiarize. Who can always know exactly where the content in my head came from?

tip: http://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/materials/the-other-day-in-the-cafeteria-rumours-about-plagiarism

What do I say, when I am asked?

- Reflect: Where can I help? Where not? What are my limits, restrictions?

- Consider differences of subjects!

- Helpful positive question: "What do I have to cite?" instead of "What am I not allowed to do?"

- Depending on the question, refer to more specialized advice and services (e. g. writing centre, departments, supervisor, …).

Refer to specialized services

- Make sure, you know about your institution's services, e. g.
    - encourage to ask instructors and supervisors
    - Writing Centre
    - Centre for Key Skills
    - Student Advisory Services
    - Learning Centre
    - International Office
    - Counselling units
    - Library services e. g. literature management software
    - …

Basic recommendations for educational material

- Developing competencies

  Methodological and working skills and moral competencies can only develop by discussion and practice – not by instruction.

- Starting discussions

  Educational material should initiate and encourage dealing with and arguing over issues of integrity.

- Debating the borderline and grey-zone

  Real situations frequently lie in between clearly "right" or "wrong". Competencies and knowledge to judge are a key skills.

Basic recommendations for educational material

- Consider different learning styles.

- Be positive and supportive.

- Emphasize why citations in the context of academic work are useful, necessary and advantageous.

- The citation style is secondary - it's about the traceability, reproducibility, and interlinking of content.
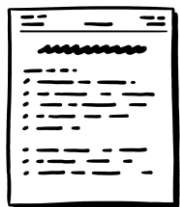
Materials for courses & training

- ENAI offers didactical support

- Exercises, videos etc.:
  http://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/all-materials

- In Lithuanian:
  http://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/all-materials/?file=&material-language%5B%5D=lithuanian&search=1

Example I: Explainer video "Why citations?"

Citations in academic writing – we explain why they're so important!

Example II:
"Example from Mr. Apple's blog"

Mr. Apple wrote a blog post:

Carrot says about Lemon: Lemon is yellow. She also adds about him that he is a citrus. Then Carrot mentioned that Lemon is sour. And he is also bitter. Carrot also revealed that Lemon grows on trees, which is a very surprising fact!

- *Please read the text and decide about who is represented by Apple, Carrot an Lemon?*

- *Please read the text and name who is saying what?*

- *Why do you think that Lemon won the law suit against Apple?*

Activity: Software for plagiarism detection

- Why do you want to use software for plagiarism detection?

- What effect do you hope for from the software application?

- What is the current status of application and use at your institution?

Please share your perspective with the person sitting next to you.

How text-matching software works

- Automated synchronization with a database of stored documents, databases of different sizes depending on the software solution

- automated comparison with "the internet"

- Language arbitrary, but no comparison of different languages

- Marking matching strings (HOWEVER: smallest changes change the result)

- Specification of the matching source

- Specification of the percentage of matches in total (not necessarily meaningful)

Evaluation of software products

- Plagiarism detection software tests rare; new test by ENAI ongoing
- Software test 2013 by the group of Debora Weber-Wulff, Professor of Media Informatics, HTW Berlin
- General problems
  - wrong negatives
  - false positives
  - Understanding of the stated percentage of plagiarism
- Summary
  - No plagiarism, but identical passages are marked (better term: text-matching software).
  - Software is (only) a tool, not a solution.

Software use: advantages

- Copy-paste is well recognized, especially in internal comparison

- Procedures and commitment of resources emphasizes seriousness and importance of integrity issues

- Software use has an effect on the way, how students are working

- Software can be used didactically meaningful

- Software use can initiate further action and engagement with topics of integrity (spill-over-effect)

Software use: disadvantages

- softwares differ in usefulness, mostly pure text comparison programs
- unknown and limited database access
- still a lot of manual work to do
- dependence on a system where the exit costs increase
- software does not help against causes for mistakes and plagiarism
- legal questions are often ignored
- contact persons for didactical, technical and legal questions within the institution are often missing
- procedures are often not clarified
- negative effect of general suspicion

Conditions for software use

Start
- Clarification: what do I want to compare, control, achieve?
- Funds should follow the objectives, not the objectives available resources.
- All stakeholders involved are to be informed or included in the decisions.
- Open questions should be clarified beforehand, especially legal questions.

Implementation
- Procedures need to be defined and administered.
- An accompanying didactical concept is required.
- Software use requires support and consulting service.

Commitment
- Human and financial resources must be long term available.

Use scenarios for software

- voluntary plagiarism control combined with consulting in an educational setting e. g. in writing centre

- limited internal comparison of texts (with or without given suspicion)

- Mandatory or optional detection with given suspicion only (single cases)

- Mandatory or optional detection without given suspicion (general)

Conclusion software use

Conclusion software use

- For maximum positive effects, the use of software should be planned, regulated and didactically embedded.

- Software is not a solution but a tool (among others).

- Activities of only control, detection and sanction are not fruitful. A concept for prevention AND control is necessary.

- To invest resources (thoughts, time, personnel, money,…) in educational and preventive measures is a priority.

Further questions

Take away messages

- Stay positive.

- Action instead of (only) reaction.

- Every small step is decisive.

- Education and skill development is key. Librarians can help.

- Prevention first, detection second.

- Integrity and good scientific practice need to be implemented at the level of scholars and study programmes.

- Put the topic at your agenda: Start talking and discussing with all stakeholders

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