



*A guide to finding information in the Roberts-LaForge Library*

# Plagiarism Detection and Prevention: A Guide for Faculty

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## INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this Web page is to provide Delta State faculty with information about plagiarism. This Web page covers the topics of plagiarism detection and confirmation, and preventing student plagiarism.

## DETECTING PLAGIARISM:

When reading a plagiarized research paper turned in by a student, the signs of plagiarism may not always be obvious. However, there are some things that professors can pay special attention to when suspecting plagiarism.

- **Observe citations throughout the paper:** This will help determine whether or not the required citation style was used. For example, if the citations in the paper conform to Turabian style when the MLA style was required for the paper, you may be looking at a plagiarized paper (Gardiner). Also, you may find more than one citation style used throughout the paper. Robert Harris, the author of the web page "Anti-Plagiarism Strategies for Research Papers", has stated "if some paragraphs are cited in MLA style, while other references are in APA and perhaps one or two are in CBE or Chicago, you are probably looking at a paste up."
- **Observe the writing style or styles used in the paper:** Sometimes, you may notice that some of the writing used in a paper does not "sound like" something the student would write (Gardiner). The unusual words or wording may include "jargon or advanced vocabulary"(Hinchliffe). Other papers may include a writing style that is below average (Pyatt).
- **Look for signs that the paper is outdated:** Sometimes, professors can find signs that the paper being read may be outdated. For example, the paper may contain statements which are no longer true such as "Al Gore, the vice-president of the United States....." (Pyatt). Also, the sources used for the paper may need to be checked for currency. If all of the sources listed in references or works cited are several years old, then the paper may be an example of plagiarism (Nowakowski).
- **Observe the font used in the paper:** A paper may contain more than one "font style or size." For example, you may find that Times New Roman is used in one section of the paper while Courier New is used in another. Different fonts throughout a paper would indicate that a student may have copied and pasted various portions of Web pages together into a word processor ("Plagiarism-Prevention and Detection").
- **Look for signs that the paper veers away from the topic:** The paper may not cover certain points that need to be covered or it may be completely or partially irrelevant to the original topic (Ferguson).

## CONFIRMING PLAGIARISM:

- **Using one or more search engines:** One way to confirm that a paper has been plagiarized is to use a Web search engine, such as Google. In the search engine's search box, you can type in an unusual word or phrase and find documents on the Web containing the search term. If the paper was taken from a paper mill on the Web, the search engine can find the site containing the original paper (Young). When performing a phrase search in a search engine, you may want to enclose it in quotation marks (Barnstrom). Other search engines available on the Web include:

Alltheweb

Alta Vista

Dogpile

Lycos

Metasearch

Yahoo!

- **Using anti-plagiarism software or an online service:** One way to confirm that a paper contains plagiarism is to use plagiarism detection software. Another way is to let an online service search for plagiarism for you. Two examples of online plagiarism detection services are Turnitin and Glatt Plagiarism Services. Examples of detection software include Wcopyfind and EVE2: The Essay Verification Engine ("Google Directory"). Visit these Web sites of services and software for information on pricing or availability.

## TIPS FOR PREVENTING STUDENT PLAGIARISM:

- **Educate Students on the Topic of Plagiarism:** Educating students on this topic can include teaching them what is and what is not plagiarism. More specifically, faculty need to cover the issues of paraphrasing, using quotation marks with quotes, providing citations, and any other relevant topics ("Preventing Plagiarism").
- **Warn Students of the Penalties for Plagiarizing and Let Them Know You Can Detect It:** One way to discourage plagiarism is to let students know that there is a penalty for plagiarizing. To make them aware of the penalty, you may wish to include the university policy against plagiarism in your syllabus. According to the Bulletin of Delta State University 2004-2006, "cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated." The bulletin also states:

If it is established that a violation has occurred, instructors may determine the penalty and/or may report the offense to the division/department chair, the student's advisor, and dean. The usual penalty involves a grade of zero on the test, examination, or paper in question. A second offense by any student should be reported immediately for more stringent action (77).

In addition, you may wish to use an anti-plagiarism service or software and let students know about it. Letting them know you can detect it can further discourage student plagiarism (Pyatt).

- **Have Students Do Their Research Papers or Term Papers in Progressive Steps:** Requiring students to do their papers in progressive steps can be an effective way to prevent plagiarism. For example, a professor may require students to turn in a list of resources, then an outline of the paper, then a rough draft, and finally the final draft (Whitley Jr. and Keith-Spiegel 89). If time

permits, a professor may also want to require students to discuss papers in class as a step in the process (Stillwell).

- **Give Students Narrow Topics:** Another way to prevent student plagiarism is to give students narrow topics to choose from instead of broad subjects. It may be more difficult to find another paper online on a given narrow topic than on a broad subject ("Plagiarism- Prevention and Detection").

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