

### **Overview of Research Critical of Plagiarism Detection Services (PDS):**

- Some studies show explicit use of PDS does not deter student plagiarism (Youmans, “Does Turnitin...”)
- Research finds Google a more effective search engine, at no additional institutional cost (Purdy “Calling Off”).
- Services like Turnitin.com seek to regulate what constitutes ‘authorship’ and ‘originality,’ complex concepts, particularly in changing corporate, political, and postmodern digital environments
- Inconsistencies and functionality concerns
- PDS tools don’t access all databases equally to check for ‘originality’; some disciplines may be more at risk than others (Kaner and Fiedler).
- PDS only catches certain kinds of plagiarism (and not consistently) while ignoring other kinds like paraphrasing, ‘patch writing,’ etc. Some scholars argue better teaching is the answer (students don’t understand college-level reading, use quotations and material out of context and inappropriately, don’t read deeply, etc.) (Parry)
- Rhetorical & ethical concern of situating learning environment as combative, aggressive relationship between instructor and student
- Moral issues surrounding ‘requiring’ students to submit their writing to a PDS—conflicts with educational goal of developing students’ characters
- Ethical concerns over companies like Turnitin, when similar ones were suspected in 2002 of selling compiled student essays to online paper mill websites (Young).
- Some scholars argue PDS violates students’ intellectual property rights (however, US court just ruled faculty use of PDS are constitutional under “Fair Use” laws, fyi)
- Chao et al find most plagiarism happens because students lack knowledge of proper documentation and paraphrasing; “point to need for consistent in-depth instruction in proper quotation, citation, and paraphrasing techniques.”
- Warn predicts that adoption of PDS programs will teach students new avoidance strategies and higher level of paraphrase, thus resulting in continued plagiarism but undetected by software.
- Many other scholars have concerns about machine-graded writing (see Ericson and Haswell)

### Selected Annotated Bibliography:<sup>1</sup>

Butakov, Sergey, Vadim Dyagilev, Alexander Tshkay. "Protecting Students' Intellectual Property in the Web Plagiarism Detection Process." *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning* 13.5 (19 December 2012): 1-19.

- Focuses on student concerns that online plagiarism detection cites violate students' intellectual property rights/violation of copyright law

Chao, Chia-An, William J. Wilhelm, and Brian D. Beureuther. "A Study of Electronic Detection and Pedagogical Approaches for Reducing Plagiarism." *Delta Pi Epsilon Journal* 51.1 (Winter 2009): 31-42.

- FROM ABSTRACT: This finding indicates that the lack of knowledge in proper documentation and paraphrasing is a primary reason why some students plagiarize, albeit perhaps inadvertently. Implications point to the need for consistent in-depth instruction in proper quotation, citation, and paraphrasing techniques.

Clanton, J. Caleb. "A Moral Case against Uses of Plagiarism Detection Services." *International Journal of Applied Psychology* 23.1 (Spring 2009): 17-26.

- Abstract: The statistics on plagiarism are staggering. No wonder, then, that many colleges and universities have started using plagiarism detection services (PDSs) such as Turnitin. But there are problems- and more problems than most critics have recognized. Whereas critics typically focus on legal issues related to intellectual property and privacy rights, I argue that unless we can reasonably suspect academic dishonesty, it's morally problematic to require submission through a PDS. Even if we insist that the benefits of PDS use are worth the costs of saddling students with an undeserved burden of proof, blanket PDS use- that is, using PDSs across the board and without reasonable suspicion- is problematic because it conflicts with one of the aims of educational institutions: to cultivate students' characters. Although blanket PDS use may in fact deter plagiarism, it doesn't create an environment conducive to the formation of honor, and it may even be a hindrance.[ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

"Does Turnitin Software Prevent Plagiarism?" *Distance Education Report* 15.24 (December 2011): 6.

- Abstract: The article focuses on a study that examines whether professors' use of Turnitin, a software program that can identify plagiarized materials, reduce or prevent plagiarism on 569 on-site and distance education students taking up a business program at a university in New Zealand. It assesses the occurrence, extent, and nature of plagiarism on two major assignments. Results show that a quarter of students'

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<sup>1</sup> All abstracts below are taken directly from EBSCOhost, the article, or website; none are in my own words. ☺

preparations were plagiarized thus showing that Turnitin does not deter student plagiarism.

Emerson, Lisa. "Plagiarism, a Turnitin Trial, and an Experience of Cultural Disorientation." In *Originality, Imitation, and Plagiarism: Teaching Writing in the Digital Age*. Eds. Caroline Eisner and Martha Vicinus. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P; 2008. 183-194.

Ericsson, Patricia Freitag and Richard and Haswell, eds. *Machine Scoring of Student Essays: Truth and Consequences*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 2006.

- Excerpted from *Amazon.com*: The current trend toward machine-scoring of student work, Ericsson and Haswell argue, has created an emerging issue with implications for higher education across the disciplines, but with particular importance for those in English departments and in administration. The academic community has been silent on the issue—some would say excluded from it—while the commercial entities who develop essay-scoring software have been very active. [...] Reading and evaluating student writing is a time-consuming process, yet it is a vital part of both student placement and coursework at post-secondary institutions. In recent years, commercial computer-evaluation programs have been developed to score student essays in both of these contexts. Two-year colleges have been especially drawn to these programs, but four-year institutions are moving to them as well, because of the cost-savings they promise. Unfortunately, to a large extent, the programs have been written, and institutions are installing them, without attention to their instructional validity or adequacy. Since the education software companies are moving so rapidly into what they perceive as a promising new market, a wider discussion of machine-scoring is vital if scholars hope to influence development and/or implementation of the programs being created. What is needed, then, is a critical resource to help teachers and administrators evaluate programs they might be considering, and to more fully envision the instructional consequences of adopting them.

Fearn, Hannah. "Plagiarism Software Can Be Beaten by Simple Tech Tricks." *Times Higher Education* 1982 (1/20/11): 12.

Kaner, Cem and Rebecca L. Fiedler. "A Cautionary Note on Checking Software Engineering Papers for Plagiarism." *IEEE Transactions of Education* 51.2 (May 2008): 184-88.

- Abstract: Several tools are marketed to the educational community for plagiarism detection and prevention. This article briefly contrasts the performance of two leading tools, TurnItIn and MyDropBox, in detecting submissions that were obviously plagiarized from articles published in IEEE journals. Both tools performed poorly because they do not compare submitted writings to publications in the IEEE database. Moreover, these tools do not cover the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) database or several others important for scholarly work in software engineering. Reports from these tools suggesting that a submission has "passed" can encourage false confidence in the integrity of a submitted writing. Additionally, students can submit

drafts to determine the extent to which these tools detect plagiarism in their work. Because the tool samples the engineering professional literature narrowly, the student who chooses to plagiarize can use this tool to determine what plagiarism will be invisible to the faculty member. An appearance of successful plagiarism prevention may in fact reflect better training of students to avoid plagiarism detection.[ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

McKeever, Lucy. "Online Plagiarism Detection Services—Saviour or Scourge?" *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 31.2 (Apr 2006): 155-65.

- Abstract: Although the exponential growth of the Internet has made it easier than ever to carry out plagiarism, it has also made it much easier to detect. This paper gives an overview of the many different methods of detecting web-based plagiarism which are currently available, assessing practical matters such as cost, functionality and performance. Different types of plagiarism detection services are briefly outlined by broad category. The paper then considers the relative advantages and disadvantages of the different methods, referring to comparative studies where possible. It also draws out some of the more general drawbacks of electronic detection, ranging from practical matters such as technical restrictions, data protection issues, and cost, to the human impact on staff and students alike. It seeks to counterbalance these drawbacks by outlining the many possible benefits of implementing online detection in academic institutions, aside from the obvious saving of time when dealing with large cohorts of students. It argues that if online detection is used in conjunction with the many valuable "anti-plagiarism" resources and tutorials available on the web, it really can become a positive teaching aid for staff and students alike, rather than a threatening online policing system. The paper concludes with a brief forecast for the future of plagiarism detection, and emphasizes that any form of online detection service can only act as a mere diagnostic tool to highlight possible cases of plagiarism, with human judgement always needed to investigate further.

Morgan, Phoebe and Jacqueline Vaughn. "The Case of the Pilfered Paper: Implications of Online Writing Assistance and Web-Based Plagiarism Detection Services." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 43.4 (Oct 2010): 755-58.

- Abstract: While there is nothing new about academic dishonesty, how it is committed, prevented, and detected has been dramatically transformed by the advent of online technologies. This article briefly describes the concurrent emergence of online writing assistance services and Web-based plagiarism detection tools and examines the implications of both for student-faculty relations, faculty workload, and student learning. Finally, we provide three alternative strategies for deterring, detecting, and documenting all forms of plagiarism.

Parry, Marc. "NYU Prof Vows Never to Probe Cheating Again—and Faces a Backlash." *Chronicle.com*. 21 July 2011. <http://chronicle.com/blogs/wiredcampus/nyu-prof-vows-never-to-probe-cheating-again—and-faces-a-backlash/32351>.

Parry, Marc. "Software Catches (and also Helps) Young Plagiarists." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 58.12 (11/11/11): A1-A14.

- Excerpted summary: "Some researchers point to better teaching, not technology, as the key to preventing plagiarism. [...] Students are "dragging sentences out of random, simplistic sources and pasting them together in an often incomprehensible pastiche" of sentences, Ms. Howard said in presenting the data at a conference this year.

"How much plagiarism goes away if students actually know how to read and write from sources?" she asks *The Chronicle*. "My guess is: a lot."

[...]

Students use books and journals, and they generally know how to cite them. But what they cite tends to come from the first page of a source, the project found. They pull "killer quotes" rather than engage with the overall argument. Almost half the time, they cite sources four pages or fewer in length.

On the basis of that research, Ms. Howard calls for a "fundamental shift" in how writing is taught. Professors should focus more on starting the research process collaboratively with students, she says. They should select a few complex sources and explore them with the whole class.

[...]

Others echo her emphasis on pedagogy and communication. Ryan Cordell, an assistant professor of English at St. Norbert College, in Wisconsin, describes citation by putting it in terms that students understand. You wouldn't steal somebody's post on Twitter, he explains to them. Instead you mark it with "RT," for retweet. Same with Facebook: "If you get something cool from someone, you tag them."

### [Students Fail to Read Sources Deeply](#)

The Citation Project, a national study of 174 student papers from 16 colleges and universities, is examining how students use sources in their research papers. Here are some highlights of the preliminary findings, released this year:

- Students rarely cite material located very far into sources:
- Sources are misused in one of five citations, and citations almost always draw on very short passages:
- Of the 1,911 student uses of sources that the project coded, 4% are copied and cited but not marked as quotations from a source; 42% are copied and marked as quotations; 16% are

"patchwritten," defined as "restating a phrase, clause, or one or more sentences while staying close to the language or syntax of the source"; 32% are paraphrased; and 6% are summarized.

- More than half of the papers misuse sources

Purdy, James. "Calling off the Hounds: Technology and the Visibility of Plagiarism." *Pedagogy* 5.2 (Spring 2005): 275-95.

- Abstract: Discusses a study that evaluated the performance of several plagiarism detection software with primary concern on Internet plagiarism and to explore the effect of the technologies on the understanding of plagiarism and writing instruction. Ethical and moral problems encountered during the study; Comparison of the plagiarism detection performance of free online search engine Google with other fee-based services; Inconsistencies and functionality concerns of software EVE2 in the Web sites identified as sources of plagiarism.

Purdy, James. "Anxiety and the Archive: Understanding Digital Plagiarism Detection Services as Digital Archives." *Computers & Composition* 26.2 (June 2009): 65-77.

- Abstract: Based on a case study of the popular plagiarism detection service Turnitin, particularly its "Legal Document," this article contends that plagiarism detection services should be viewed as digital archives. Services like Turnitin not only seek to regulate what constitute original texts and appropriate writing practices but also to advance conceptions of the work that archives should do in storing and circulating texts in digital spaces. This article concludes that the services we sometimes use to ensure the integrity of students' texts can themselves be of questionable integrity—largely through the design of their archives. As increasing numbers of texts take digital form, the problems and promise of digital archives will demand thoughtful responses that do not rush to replace questionable writing and research practices with equally troubling pedagogical and archival ones. These thoughtful responses start with exploring the use of plagiarism detection service archival technology in unadvertised ways.[Copyright & Elsevier]

Thompson, Carol C. "Unintended Lessons: Plagiarism and the University." *Teachers College Board* 108.12 (Dec 2006): 2439-49).

- Abstract: Plagiarism, like other ethical problems, flourishes in atmospheres with few consequences. The finding by one survey that only 27% of college students thought cutting and pasting someone else's work was "serious cheating" is troubling evidence of student inclination to cut corners ethically. Papers are easily copied from the Internet, and adult role models in the larger world are equivocal. Academic settings themselves may subtly encourage such behaviors if they think of their students as customers and outsource teaching to adjuncts. Plagiarism detection software, though helpful, is not without its own problems. Colleges and universities that carefully outline consequences,

particularly if these are part of an honor system collaboratively run by students and faculty, can reduce plagiarism.

Warn, James. "Plagiarism Software: No Magic Bullet!" *Higher Education Research and Development* 25.2 (May 2006): 195-208.

- Abstract: The ready availability of Internet resources has made it easier than ever for students to plagiarize and many higher education institutions have resorted to checking essays with plagiarism detection software. Student behaviour is likely to change in response to this increased scrutiny but not necessarily in the desired direction. Internet technology facilitates a "cut and paste" assembly-line approach to essay writing that will persist despite the use of plagiarism software. It is predicted that students will resort to increased use of paraphrase in order to drop below the radar of the detection software. To illustrate this trend, samples of student essays are analysed and limitations of plagiarism software discussed. The paper concludes with suggestions for developing a coordinated institutional policy on plagiarism, and recommends that policy encompass training and educational initiatives to complement any enforcement strategy using plagiarism software.

Williams, Bronwyn T. "Literacy & Identity: Trust, Betrayal, and Authorship: Plagiarism and How We Perceive Students." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 51.4 (Dec 2007) 350-4.

- Abstract: Emotional responses to plagiarism are rarely addressed in professional literature that focuses on ethics and good teaching practices. Yet, the emotions that are unleashed by cases of plagiarism, or suspicions of plagiarism, influence how we perceive our students and how we approach teaching them. Such responses have been complicated by online plagiarism-detection services that emphasize surveillance and detection. My opposition to such plagiarism software services grows from the conviction that if we use them we are not only poisoning classroom relationships, but also we are missing important opportunities for teaching.

Youmans, Robert J. "Does the Adoption of Plagiarism-Detection Software in Higher Education Reduce Plagiarism?" *Studies in Higher Education* 36.7 (2011): 749-61.

- Abstract: In two studies, students at California State University, Northridge wrote papers that were checked for plagiarism using plagiarism-detection software. In the first study, half of the students in two classes were randomly selected and told by the professor that their term papers would be scanned for plagiarism using the software. Students in the remainder of each class were not informed that the software would be used. The researcher predicted that students who were explicitly warned about the use of the software would plagiarize less than students who were not, but the warning had no effect. In a second study, students wrote two papers in a series. Their knowledge about

plagiarism-detection software was inversely correlated with plagiarism rates on the first paper, but no correlation was found between knowledge and plagiarism on the second paper. Instead, participants were discovered to draw repeatedly from the same sources of plagiarized material across papers.

Young, Jeffrey R. 2002. "Anti-Plagiarism Experts Raise Questions about Services with Links to Sites Selling Papers." *Chronicle.com* (12 March 2002). Web.  
<http://chronicle.com/article/Anti-Plagiarism-Experts-Raise/114964/>

Zwagerman, Sean. "The Scarlet 'P': Plagiarism, Panopticism, and the Rhetoric of Academic Integrity." *College Composition and Communication* 59.4 (June 2008): 676-710.