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Focus

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Righting writing: Web sites offer help in combating digital plagiarism

What is plagiarism? Plagiarism is taking someone else's words or ideas and passing them off as your own without giving proper credit to the source of your information. As such, it is intellectual theft and is considered one of the most serious forms of academic dishonesty.

In some cases, the act of plagiarizing is intentional. The student, for example, who buys or "borrows" another student's term paper is aware that he is cheating. He engages in this behavior in the belief that he will not be caught. In other cases, the plagiarism is unintentional: a student who does not cite his sources or who fails to use quotation marks when using someone else's words may simply be ignorant of the proper way to document his information.

"...75 percent of students on most campuses admit to some form of cheating, including plagiarism."

Deliberate acts of plagiarism have dramatically increased over the last few years largely as a result of the Internet. The Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University (<http://www.academicintegrity.org>) reports that 75 percent of students on most campuses admit to some form of cheating, including plagiarism. It is a very simple process to cut and paste from a Web site or an online full-text database, and very difficult to detect. As if this were not enough, there are literally hundreds of paper mills on the Internet that are in the business of selling term papers. For a fee, students can purchase "sample"

term papers that they can then turn in as their own.

Combating plagiarism

It is best to deal with plagiarism before it occurs rather than after the fact. Many experts recommend the following in preventing plagiarism:

Educate yourself on the issue. Read on the topic, learn to surf the Web, visit Web sites that offer detection services, become aware of the various term paper mills on the Internet. Refer to the Dacus Library Research Guide, "Plagiarism" (www.winthrop.edu/dacus/About/Infoguides/plagiarism.htm) for a list of some resources to help you learn more.

Be upfront with your students about plagiarism. Help them understand what it is and what your expectations are. Instruct them in the appropriate use of information found on the Internet. Teach them the proper way to document sources and why it is important to do so. Tell them that you are aware of the paper mills and the ways the Internet is being used to plagiarize and that you will be checking. Let them know the penalties for deliberate plagiarism.

Make written assignments that are unique and draw on the specifics of the class. General term paper topics ("Write a paper on abortion") lend themselves to easy plagiarism. Papers that draw on class activities or personal experiences are much more difficult to plagiarize. Have in-class written assignments that will give you samples of student writing to compare with more formal term papers.

If you think someone has plagiarized, there are several steps you can take to check:

- Use a general Internet search engine like Hotbot, Webcrawler, Yahoo, Altavista, Google, or others to search keywords or phrases from the suspect paper. A list of the major search engines can be found on the Dacus Library Research Guide ("Internet Search Help" <http://www.winthrop.edu/dacus/About/Infoguides/isrchhlp.htm>). Oftentimes a student who plagiarizes makes little, if any, change to the content, so keyword or phrase searching might lead you to the source that was plagiarized.

- Require the student to turn in copies of his sources.

- Use a plagiarism detection service like *Turnitin.com* to check on a suspect paper.

Plagiarism detection sites

There are a number of commercial sites on the Internet that offer various types of detection services. One that is available to Winthrop faculty at no charge is *Turnitin.com*. This service provides an avenue for instructors to submit student papers for checking within its database of papers and throughout the Internet. (None of the sites check proprietary data bases.) An "originality report" is generated that highlights any passages that appear to be copied from an online source.

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Lutz grant enables archives expansion

The Winthrop Archives and Special Collections is brimming with fascinating documents, diaries, letters, deeds, memorabilia, photographs and other items relating to Winthrop, women's history, the Catawba Region and many other topics. Unfortunately, some of the items are difficult to examine due to their fragility. This leads to a dilemma that many archivists face: Do you risk the safety and preservation of an item by allowing researchers to use it? If not, what is the point of preserving it if no one can ever use the item?



York Presbyterian Church, c.1860

photographs and manuscripts. Eventually, photographs and other material will be accessible to the public via the online catalogue. The first project is to digitize the images found on glass plate negatives from the John R. Schorb collection. Schorb, who was one of South Carolina's earliest photographers, practiced his art in York, S.C., from the 1850s until his death in 1908. Schorb came to America in 1834 from Germany. After several years he attended Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, and studied to become a teacher. One of his courses was natural philosophy under Dr. Charles Avery. Avery had visited Louis Daguerre in Paris and learned about his process of making permanent photographs. Avery taught Schorb what he had learned from Daguerre and by about 1843 or 1844, Schorb was taking photographs. He graduated from Hamilton in 1844 and traveled about for a few years, taking photographs. He made his way to South Carolina in 1848 and by 1850 had moved to Winnsboro to teach at Mount Zion Institute, all the while taking photographs. In 1853 he moved to Yorkville, now York, to teach at the Yorkville Female

Last year, with funding from the Lutz Foundation of Chester, S.C., certain materials will eventually become more accessible to researchers as well as being preserved. A \$5,500 grant from the Foundation allowed the Library to purchase a computer and high quality scanner to begin a digitization project of

Academy and the Kings Mountain Military Academy. Schorb became a full-time photographer when he opened a studio at his home on West Liberty Street in 1869 and took photographs until his death at age 90. The Archives holds about 200 glass plate negatives of his photographic work. Negatives were made of glass before the advent of the type we know today. We have no prints of the negatives for researchers to use and the negatives, being glass and of varying sizes, are much too fragile to allow access to the average researcher. In order to provide access to the images, we are initiating a scanning project of the negatives in order for researchers to view positive images of the photographs. The scanner and software are able to make positive images from negatives of almost any size. It is also possible to make an image more clear or lighter or darker as the need arises. In many cases a scanned image will be more distinct than a print. A few of the images are now available for perusal on the Archives web site <http://www.winthrop.edu/dacus/about/archives>.



Schorb's Grandchildren, c.1880

The scanning equipment and software were also used to create a Rock Hill Sesquicentennial digital photograph exhibit. The exhibit features images of Rock Hill and Winthrop from the Winthrop Archives and Special Collections holdings. The exhibit can be viewed on the Archives web site as well.

Digitization provides a means of examining a photograph or document in a manner that has the features of the original but allows for better preservation of the original by minimizing handling. Paper has a limited life. Although acid-free paper lasts longer than non acid-free, science has not come up with a way to make paper last forever. However, paper will last longer if it is handled with care and caution. Digitization is another tool, along with proper storage and environmental conditions, which archivists can use to preserve the past for the future.

Gina Price White
Archivist

Focus

Meet the staff

Circulation can be a thankless task. It has to work every time, not just once in a while. Moreover, those in Circulation bear the brunt of any complaint. Never mind that it might not be their fault or even their area of responsibility. That's part and parcel of being in Circulation, the first line of defense in the library for everything: from checking out books, to the dog-ate-my-book return, to 'no-I-didn't-check-it-out!-



Brittany Tant, Nancy White and Doug Short

Oops, - here-it-is-in-my-book bag,' to 'I need some notebook paper.'

Nancy White

Fortunately for Dacus, the winsome ways of its Head of Circulation, Nancy White, allows us to take everything in stride. Arriving in 1995, Nancy has served as the chief of Circulation since 2000.

Nancy's dogs Tess and Lucy are her "children." Her husband Jeff is a USAirways employee. Nancy is an avid runner, logging in (or would that be jogging?) more than 25 miles a week. She is also a gourmet cook and often brings in delicacies for the library staff to munch on. We, too, may need to join her on her daily jogs! In recognition of her outstanding work, Nancy received a Presidential Citation last spring.

Doug Short

Although a Short, Doug has longsuffering patience, and it's a good thing. Working for Dacus in Circulation since 1999, Doug has heard and seen it all. But he never loses his sense of humor or his enthusiasm for the job. When the library began reallocating funds, Doug stepped up to the plate and took on additional duties without complaint, allowing the library to divert more funds to materials.

Doug is by his own admission a "movie junkie" and boasts a considerable video collection. You may have seen Doug in a movie theater working before you saw him working here. In spite of everything, Doug plans to enroll in USC's library program in 2003. Seriously, we're delighted to add another to our ranks, and look forward to helping Doug any way we can.

Brittany Tant

Arriving one month earlier than her co-worker Doug, Brittany has been at Circulation ever since. Brittany, too, took on additional responsibilities when Dacus began reallocating its funds to secure a larger materials budget. Brittany is also responsible for the library's fine e-reserves collection that allows students access 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

But Brittany has been with Dacus much longer than 1999. She worked for us her entire four years as an undergraduate.

Her 20-month old son, Dustin, is a library regular and we see a library in his future for sure. Her two Basset hounds, Fred and Ginger, dance about the house with Dustin leading the way. Brittany is also very active in her church, and is involved in many religious educational activities for children.



Patti Stafford

The phrase "Government Documents" may seem to some to be a great soporific; but it's hardly the case as Patti Stafford, our Docs Assistant, will gladly tell you. Patti "officially" arrived on board in 1999. She graduated from Winthrop with an English degree in the same year.

Most of her evenings are spent with her three dogs, Slugger, W.G. and Buddy. Bill, her fiancé, is also being trained but we assume for another, more important role. Wedding bells are certain to ring in the near future. Patti spends her spare time in her flower garden, writing children's stories and showing off her chrysanthemums. The drought tried to overtake Patti's flowers but failed in the end.

Dacus Focus

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Library instruction promotes success in research

Last year over 2000 students came to Dacus Library for library instruction classes. These classes are held in the library classroom, located on the ground floor of the library, and taught by one of the library faculty. The classroom is equipped with twenty-four computers the students can use for hands on practice.

The library instruction sessions have a dual purpose – to acquaint the students with the library and to teach them how to begin their research. For many students, especially those in Writing 101, the instruction session may be the first time they’ve ever been in Dacus Library. For that reason part of the instruction session is a general introduction to the library—where different materials are located, procedures for making photocopies and printouts and where to go if they need help. The instruction session also serves to introduce the students to a librarian. Students are often more comfortable asking the librarian who taught their class for help than they are approaching the librarian at the reference desk.

The main goal of the instruction sessions is to give the students a sound start in doing their research. This is accomplished by introducing them to appropriate print and electronic indexes,

teaching searching techniques, and making sure they understand the research process in general. Students are then given time at the end of the class to practice the skills they’ve learned and find some information that will help them for the project they’re working on.

Most of the groups that come to the library for instruction are Writing 101 classes, since the library session is a required part of the Writing 101 curriculum. However, any professor whose students are going to be working on a research-based assignment is encouraged to schedule a library instruction session. Last year we provided instruction for 21 graduate level classes and 76 undergraduate classes. International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement classes from the local high schools also come to Dacus Library for formal instruction sessions.

As a supplement to the formal instruction classes, tutorials for various databases, as well as a virtual tour of the library, can be found on the Dacus Library website (www.winthrop.edu/dacus). The Virtual Tour, which is also a required part of Writing 101, not only introduces the physical layout of the building but also teaches how to use the Dacus Online Catalog to find materials in the library.

Any professor who wishes to schedule a session for their class should contact David Weeks at x2319 or weeksd@winthrop.edu.

David Weeks
Coordinator, Bibliographic Instruction

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Winthrop faculty interested in setting up a free account with *Turnitin.com* should first contact Gale Teaster in Dacus Library (ext. 2311) to get a user ID and password. Once these are secured, go to Dacus Library Online (www.winthrop.edu/dacus), click on the “Databases” button, select “T” from the alphabetical list of all databases and click on *Turnitin.com*. You will need your user ID and password to login and set up an account.

Bob Gorman
Head of Reference