Plagiarism: Literary Theft
Sheila Wrobel, Compliance Officer

“Academic dishonesty cases increase at UNL, better detection is to credit”
By Hailey Konnath, Daily Nebraskan, December 2, 2010

- “Plagiarism is the most common form of academic dishonesty among students” (Matthew Hecker, UNL Dean of Students)

- “There seems to be some disagreement between students and teachers as to what counts as academic dishonesty and cheating” (Steven Swartz, Asst Dir UNL Ethics Center)
Academic dishonesty cases increase at UNL, better detection is to credit”
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- Undergraduate: Plagiarism results in failing grades, class dismissal, but not dismissal from the university generally
- Graduate: Zero tolerance; dismissal
- Judicial Affairs office is central record keeping location & brings student Code of Conduct charges
- UNMC: each College addresses plagiarism separately; no central approach

What is Plagiarism?
Do we all Agree?

"The word plagiarism derives from Latin roots: plagiarus, an abductor, and plagiare, to steal"
Source: Historyhttp://hnn.us/articles/514.html

1. Plagiarism of ideas
2. Plagiarism of text
3. Paraphrasing
4. Authorship Disputes
5. Self-plagiarism
CHEATING (Page 60)

*A general definition of cheating is the use or attempted use of unauthorized materials or information for an academic exercise.

Examples of cheating include but are not limited to:

1. using unauthorized materials such as books, notes, calculators or other aids during an examination or other academic exercises;
2. receiving unauthorized assistance from another person during an exam or exercise such as copying answers, receiving answer signals, conversation or having another person take an examination for you;
3. providing assistance to another person during an exam or exercise, such as allowing your answers to be copied, signaling answers or taking an exam for someone else;
4. obtaining answers and/or other information without authorization from someone who has previously taken an examination; including all or a portion of previous work for another assignment without authorization.
5. including all or a portion of previous work for another assignment without authorization.

6. Appropriating another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit, i.e. an appropriate attribution or citation (plagiarism).

For example, a student who quotes verbatim the results of a previous student’s work in a required term paper, but fails to credit the individual through citation. The work is recent and thus cannot be considered common knowledge.”
Plagiarism as Research Misconduct

• Office of Science & Technology Federal Policy on Research Misconduct
• PHS definition at 42 CFR 93.103
• NSF definition at 45 CFR 689.1

“The appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results or words without giving appropriate credit”

Plagiarism of Ideas

• “Appropriating an idea (e.g. an explanation, a theory, a conclusion, a hypothesis, a metaphor) in whole or in part, or with superficial modifications without giving credit to its originator”

• Deriving insight through interaction with an individual not necessarily connected to a scholarly work

Source: “Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing”, by Miguel Roig, PhD, page 4
Plagiarism of Ideas

- Inadvertent or unconscious plagiarism
- Author thinks the work is original
- George Harrison’s “My Sweet Lord” has the same musical elements as the Chiffons “He’s so Fine”

*Music Corp v. Bright Tunes Harrisongs Music, Ltd, 1976*
- Harrison liable for Copyright infringement
- Same melodies in same order & repetitive sequences & nearly identical harmonies

Source: UCLA Law & Columbia Law School Copyright Infringement Project at:
http://cip.law.ucla.edu/cases/case_brightharrisongs.html

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**Music Corp v. Bright Tunes Harrisongs Music, Ltd, 1976**

Court’s opinion:

. . .“(Harrison’s) subconscious knew it already had worked in a song his conscious mind did not remember . . . I do not believe he did so deliberately . . . This is, under the law, infringement of copyright, and is no less so even though subconsciously accomplished.”
**Plagiarism of Text**

- “Copying a portion of text from another source without giving credit to its author and without enclosing the borrowed text in quotation marks”

- Most common type of plagiarism

**Plagiarism of Text: Variations**

1. **Patchwriting/paraphrasing**
   - Inserting or deleting words from copied text, or substituting synonyms but not giving credit

2. **Mosaic plagiarism**
   - Borrowing ideas & opinions and some verbatim phrases, while intertwining author’s own ideas and opinions

   Is this “really” plagiarism? Would a student think so?

Source: “Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing, by Miguel Roig, PhD.”
Paraphrasing

How should a writer properly paraphrase?

1) Either create the exact same meaning and properly attribute to the original author or

2) Sufficiently modify the text so it is judged to be new writing

** Follow writing guides for applicable industry if they exist

Source: "Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing, by Miguel Roig, PhD, page 9

“Common Knowledge” Exception to Plagiarism

One general exception to giving credit to original sources is when information represents “common knowledge”

Ex1. “George Washington was the first President of the United States”

Ex2. “Charles Dawes was the 30th Vice President of the United States” -- common knowledge?

Source: "Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing, by Miguel Roig, PhD, page 14
“Common Knowledge” Exception

DHHS Office of Research Integrity plagiarism caveat:

“ORI generally does not pursue the limited use of identical or nearly-identical phrases which describe a commonly-used methodology or previous research because ORI does not consider such use as substantially misleading to the reader or of great significance.”

Source: http://ori.dhhs.gov/policies/plagiarism.shtml

Issues with “Common Knowledge” Exception

- Who determines what is common knowledge?
- The level of education and expertise of the writer and the readers
- “I found it on the Internet so it is common knowledge”

“Q: What if I already knew something and then saw it in a source? Do I need to cite it anyway?”

“A: You have just come across the "common knowledge" exception to plagiarism. If you think an idea is common knowledge (like a historic date), you do not need to cite it. Some people say that if you see the same idea in three or more sources it's common knowledge. However, if you use an author's exact wording or individual twist on common knowledge, you should cite it anyway. The common knowledge exception is always a judgment call, so--when in doubt--ask your professor or cite it anyway.”

Case Study: The Background Section

“Professor X writes a grant proposal in which the background section duplicates, nearly verbatim, two pages from a paper published by Professor Z. The proposal cites Professor Z’s paper, but does not say that the background section is based on the paper.”

Plagiarism??? UNMC definition vs. ORI guidance


Spotting Plagiarism

1. Writing style changes within a paper or between papers submitted by the same author
2. Content seems familiar to the reader – “I think I’ve read this someplace before”
3. Other?
Plagiarism Detection

Software Examples:

• Turnitin.com

• Ithenticate at http://www.ithenticate.com
  1. Very useful for scientific manuscripts

--- OR ---

• Google & other search engines

Authorship Disputes

• Disagreements between collaborators or previous collaborators about who should be an author

  1. Researcher leaves a laboratory and publishes research without including original group

  2. Graduate student participates in research but is not listed on published articles as an author or may not be acknowledged
Authorship Disputes

- ORI: Authorship disputes are not plagiarism
- Recommend laboratory “pre-nuptial agreements”
  1. Understand conditions of authorship ahead of time.
- Should be resolved within the College at UNMC

ICMJE Guidelines for Authorship
International Committee of Medical Journal Editors at:
www.icmje.org/ethical_author.html

1. Substantial contributions to conception and design, acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; and
2. Drafting the article or revising it critically for important intellectual content; and
3. Final approval of the version to be published
Self-Plagiarism

“When authors reuse their own previously written work or data in a ‘new’ written product without letting the reader know that this material appeared elsewhere”

- Can you really steal from yourself? What’s the issue here?

Source: “Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing, by Miguel Roig, PhD, page 16

Self-Plagiarism Issues

1. Redundant & duplicate publications
   - Publishing the same data with slightly different outcomes/views
   - Submitting the same paper to several different journals
   - Student “double-dipping” – submitting same paper for multiple courses

2. Salami-slicing
   - Segmenting a large study into multiple publications; can mislead readers about study sample sizes

3. Data Augmentation
   - Author later collects more data and republishes results without acknowledging original data already published

Source: “Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing, by Miguel Roig, PhD, pp. 16-21
Self-Plagiarism Issues
Source: "Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing, by Miguel Roig, PhD, pp. 21-23

4. Copyright Infringement

Original journal may own the copyright of published work

5. Text Recycling

Programmatic research describing investigations that use identical methodologies. Two or more papers that describe legitimately different observations that contain almost identical methodology, literature reviews and discussions
- When is text recycling ok?

Why do People Plagiarize?

1) Lack of understanding of what plagiarism is and why it is wrong; plagiarism may be acceptable in other countries
2) Lack of technical knowledge in complex fields
3) Pressure to complete work
4) Difficulty with writing including if English is a second language
How can we Reduce Plagiarism?

1. Educate
   What is plagiarism?; why it is wrong?; how to avoid it – proper citation techniques; consequences

   Ex. UNMC College of Nursing requires all new students to complete a Blackboard course on plagiarism

2. Publicize plagiarism detection software

3. Publicize enforcement as a potential deterrent