

Plagiarism- history, detection and prevention

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Abstract

Little significance is given about “plagiarism” at the institutional level and hence, students and fresh staff sometime oversee this aspect. Ironically, many of the research scholars commit plagiarism without their knowledge. This manuscript gives an in depth perspective about plagiarism, how we can avoid and publish ones article safely. Although Sir William Shakespeare first used the word plagiarism verbatim, oxford dictionary gives credit to Ben Jonson who used the word in print. Although much electronic soft wares are available to detect plagiarized material, it can detect only word to word similarities.

Introduction

The word plagiarism may be uncommon to many, although 90% of people at least once in their life has done it with out the meaning of it! The word “plagiarism,” in the sense we use it today, first appeared in English in the various battles among Shakespeare and his peers [1, 2].

William Shakespeare and Ben Johnson [3, 4]



The *Oxford English Dictionary* credits Ben Jonson being the first to use it in print. According to the *WikiPedia.com*, plagiarism is having its Latin root, *plagiarius*, means kidnapper, seducer or plunderer. *Plagium* meant kidnapping, in turn derived from *plaga*, to capture or trap. According to *Merriam-Webster* the word plagiarism means to plagiarize.



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Webster states plagiarism as:

1. Stealing others themes/ technology/ ideas/ words and report either verbally or in writing as one's own.
2. Extension of an idea/ product from an established source with credibility.
3. Theft in literature and arts.
4. Without giving required credits/ permission make use of others production.

Recent statistics in educational sector shows that nearly 90% of all students have plagiarized something at least once and most have done it multiple times. If brought into light will be assignment/ detention in lower education and in higher education may lead to heavy penalty/ extension of semesters/ or even expulsion.

A surprising report by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority warns that exam boards appear to be failing to spot cheating, even though the number of cases of fraud is increasing. Last year, 3,600 teenagers were caught breaching the rules - a 9% rise on the previous year [3-5].

History of plagiarism

Most of the religious texts were authorless and were freely copied and incorporated into later works. Even the word scholarship meant demonstrating mastery of the ancient greats. This behavior tend to change during the Renaissance when original scholarship became more respected and individual accomplishment was recognized in many more fields that it had been previously. This started when painters began signing their works. By the mid 1600s, accusations of plagiarism and stealing ideas were common in every creative field including the sciences.

The first English copyright law was passed in the year 1709. It had as much to do with protecting the rights of publishers against book piracy as it did with protecting the author's rights against unscrupulous printers, but author's rights developed very quickly. James Boswell, better known as Samuel Johnson's biographer, was a lawyer who argued one of the important cases over how long copyrights lasted for an author and his or her heirs (it was twenty one years at the time).

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the concept and the law were very similar to what they are today. Even footnotes were being used in a form very similar to what they are today. What has changed since then has been the issue of enforcing copyrights across borders. Most European countries concluded agreements to prevent book piracy. The United States was the odd man out and refused to give any protection to foreign authors and publishers until 1891 and didn't sign on to the Berne Convention until 1988 [6].

Writers comments about plagiarism [7, 8]

TS Eliot wrote: *“Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal”*

Oscar Wilde wrote: *“No more naturally witty than the rest of us?”*

Oscar Wilde



T. S. Eliot



Plagiarism and Research Publications

Academic institutions all over the world try to inculcate ethical values among students ‘Graduate Honour System’ or ‘Graduate Honour Code’ etc. so that they are taught how to give credit, to ideas, where they are due translations, part of a report, drawings, designs and photographs, maps, graphs, illustrations, tables, primary data, derived equations, computer programs, verbal communications of information and ideas, and other sources may also constitute plagiarism, unless the source is acknowledged and properly documented’ [9, 10].

How to detect Plagiarism?

1. Search engine of internet: easy method, not a full proof method. Eg. Google search
2. Sudden change in grammar/language/british-american English/ especially when the differences take place in paragraph to paragraph.
3. Change in font style/ font size etc. may have a ‘ghost writer’ background.
4. Search at least on a random basis about the paragraph reference mentioned by the authors.
5. Electronic detection tools which even gives the % of plagiarism. eg. [Tumitin UK](#), [iThenticate](#), The [Glate](#) Plagiarism screening program, [Wcopyfind](#), [EdiTie.com](#) etc.

Note: Plagiarism software can detect only word- word plagiarism. While, detection of ‘word to word’ plagiarism is somewhat straightforward, detection of data manipulation, change in references, adoption of ideas of others, etc. are sometimes difficult to spot [9, 10].

Plagiarism and Legal aspects

Is plagiarism a crime? In some situations, it is how ever there is nothing much that can be done about it. As far as any criminal consequences in the civilian side of the law there are none unless the plagiarized work is used to make a profit otherwise the only thing that can be done about it is that it be taken to a civil court and at worst sue for damages or copyright infringement [9].

Punishment for plagiarizing depends on the depth of ‘cost’ or ‘hurt’ that is inflicted to the author. Trade- mark violation or passing-off fraudulent art pieces as originals attracts the severest punishments.

On the other hand plagiarizing, implicit or explicit, in writing or editing a textbook is well tolerated, because the reader is aware that the material 'packaged' is not really the original thoughts of the author; secondly, a textbook interspersed with too many quotations and cross references is bound to distract the reader/student. In the case of scientific research publications, a golden mean is the best approach to writing. While data manipulation is considered a 'fraud', false representation is condemnable [10].

Conclusion

One should be away as well as to be protected from plagiarism. By patenting ones publication not only gains credibility in the legal aspects but also safeguards by giving a caution to the readers. The importance of plagiarism should be emphasized at the postgraduate level or anyone who intended to publish scientific/ nonscientific materials.

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Prevention of plagiarism

1. Provide proper references which should be specific.
2. While paraphrasing make sure you are rearranging/ replacing few words.
3. Check for the original text (back references) while coding references.
4. Provide reference even to a diagrams/ graphs/ photographs/maps etc.
5. Check with a search engine for mimicking ideas/ paragraphs etc.
6. University of Wollongong, The Indiana University websites give guidance to prevent plagiarism.

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