Online Social Culture:
Does it Foster Original Work or Encourage Plagiarism?

Janet Salmons, Ph.D.
Vision2Lead, Inc.   jsalmons@vision2lead.com

For more on this model, see the chapter titled,

"Expect Originality!

Using Taxonomies to Structure Assignments that Support Original Work"
in the book
Student Plagiarism in an Online World: Problems and Solutions
Edited by Tim Roberts

Plagiarism in the Online World

What is *plagiarism*? The college Writing Program Administrators Council says that "in an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source" (*Defining and avoiding plagiarism*, 2003).

The online world offers easy access an extensive array of work by other writers. Learners no longer need to re-type material; they can easily find writings in electronic format on any subject, select, copy and paste it, and call it their own. The same technologies that make it easy to plagiarize also facilitate a rich culture of free exchange emerging in the online world. Sharing, forwarding, linking and blending information and media are intrinsic to life in the online world. Participants in this culture do not see use of materials they find online as stealing someone else's intellectual property. Similarly, learners who make free use of materials they find online for academic work do not see it as plagiarism (Kraus, 2002; Madden & Rainie, 2003, 2005; Renard, 2000; Wood, 2004 p.299). Since learners tend to study in an academic context using the same processes they use in informal interactions, it is not surprising that practices used to complete their assignments are similar to those they use in everyday interactions with friends (Crook & Light, 2002). Clearly, approaches being used to address plagiarism must take into account profound changes to the world of information and the ways it is accessed and used.

How can educators support the positive aspects of learners' use of the Internet to locate diverse materials and exchange ideas with peers within an academic culture that respects intellectual property? The author proposes a model for thinking about use of resources in academic work as a continuum, with "plagiarism" on one end and "original work" on the other.

Intentionally appropriating others' work without attribution e.g. buying/ downloading papers.

Purposefully adapting others' work without attribution.

Using sloppy academic writing skills; improper or missing attributions.

Properly referencing others' work without analysis and synthesis of ideas.

Respectfully building on others' work, synthesizing with other ideas to create new knowledge, meanings or expressions.

Academic Dishonesty

Inappropriate Paraphrasing

Misuse of Sources

Uncritical Citing

Intertextuality

Plagiarism

Original Work

Points on the Originality Continuum: Definitions

Academic Dishonesty: When learners purposefully appropriate all or part of an assignment from another source and represent it as their own, they do not benefit from the learning intended for the assignment. This kind of intentional plagiarism constitutes academic dishonesty.

Inappropriate Paraphrasing: When learners simply re-arrange the order of words in sentences or change words to synonyms, they may present their own words but are not their own ideas (APA, 2001; Share, 2006). This type of paraphrasing is a purposeful misrepresentation of someone else's work.

Misuse of Sources: When learners do not use proper citation protocols, they may inadvertently plagiarize another's work. Learners may cite the source material somewhere in the assignment, but it is not clear which passages are original and which are not (Braumoeller & Gaines, 2001). While this may be less critical in terms of academic honesty, the learner is not achieving learning objectives (*Defining and avoiding plagiarism*, 2003).

Uncritical Citing: Even when students use proper citation techniques and avoid plagiarism, they may still achieve limited learning outcomes when their work lacks analysis and synthesis of main ideas from the sources they are referencing.

Intertextuality: The term "intertextuality" can be used to describe an educationally productive process of building on or synthesizing others' ideas, and adding new perspectives or interpretations. The term was coined by Julia Kristeva in the context of literary analysis. She proposed that "any text is constructed of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another…."(Kristeva, 1980). The dictionary definition of the term is: " Relating to or deriving meaning from the interdependent ways in which texts stand in relation to each other" (*American Heritage Dictionary*). The important principle here is that learners "derive meaning" from the sources they reference. Intertextuality, then, is a term that can be used to define practices whereby learners use other sources as a springboard for new connections, and derive meaning from the process.

Original Work: At the other end of the spectrum from plagiarism, learners create their own original work: new discoveries and innovations. Proper citations are used for any foundational ideas or arguments not original to the student (Braumoeller & Gaines, 2001).

The Taxonomy of Collaborative E- Learning

The Taxonomy of Collaborative E- Learning contains three key elements: the Levels of Collaboration, Learning Activities and Trust Continuum (Salmons, 2006).

1. Levels of Collaboration

Levels of Collaboration lists progressively more collaborative styles of working in a group. One level is not better than another in absolute terms, but one may be better than another in relation to the learning goals, the configuration or social stage of the group, timing or other issues. The five levels are: Dialogue, Peer Review, Parallel, Sequential and Synergistic Collaboration. Arrows in the diagrams represent process, and the stars represent outcomes.

Levels of Collaboration can be ordered or combined in various ways to organize multi-stage projects. In the process of completing projects organized with this system, participants can gain the skills needed to lead, organize and participate in collaborative projects. The levels can also be used to purposefully build competencies in Internet and Communications Technology (ICT) literacy—competencies needed for innovative and collaborative work online.

2. Learning Activity

The Learning Activity column includes simplified descriptions of the kinds of actions learners take in each corresponding level.

3. Continuum of trust

The continuum illustrates a relationship between trust and the level of collaboration. As illustrated here, as collaboration increases, so does the need for trust. Collaboration means reliance on others' abilities and integrity, and confidence that the other learner(s) can and will share your commitment toward meeting the learning goal of the assignment. The reciprocal loyalties and common purpose among learners involves trust not only among the learners, but also between the instructor and the learners.

Taxonomy of Collaborative E-Learning: Levels of Collaboration

Levels of Collaboration
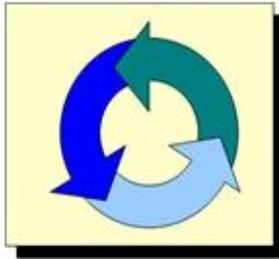
**Activity**

DIALOGUE:
Learners exchange ideas in discussion or shared event.

Low Trust
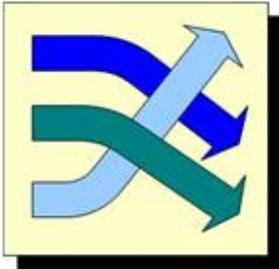
PEER REVIEW:
Learners exchange work for mutual critique through peer review and incorporate others' comments. Learners create individual outcomes based on peer input, or the process moves to another level of collaboration.
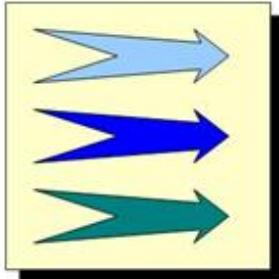
PARALLEL COLLABORATION:
Learners each complete a component of an assignment or project. Elements are combined into a collective final product, or the process moves to another level of collaboration.
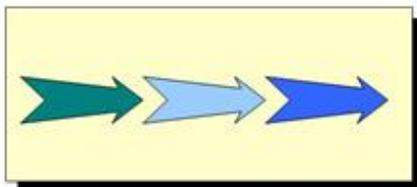
SEQUENTIAL COLLABORATION:
Learners build on each other's contributions; all are combined into a collective final product or the process moves to another level of collaboration.
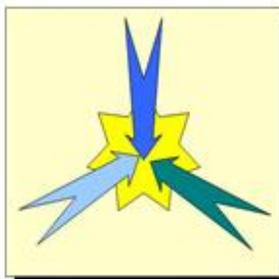
SYNERGISTIC COLLABORATION:
Learners collaborate fully at all phases in creation of an original product that meshes contributions into a collective outcome.

High Trust

C. Vision2Lead, Inc. 2006
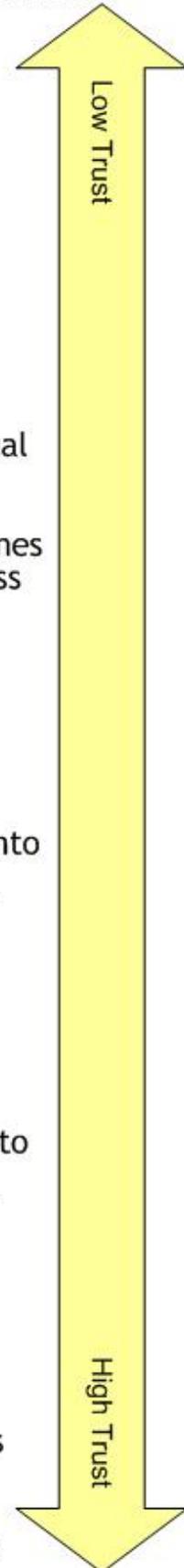
References:

American Heritage Dictionary. Retrieved October 4, 2006, from
    http://www.bartleby.com/61/91/I0199150.html
APA. (2001). *Publication manual* (Fifth ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological
    Association.
Braumoeller, B. F., & Gaines, B. J. (2001). Actions do speak louder than words: Deterring
    plagiarism with the use of plagiarism- detection software. *Political Science and Politics,*
    34(4), 835-839.
Crook, C., & Light, P. (2002). Virtual society and the cultural practice of study. In S. Woolgar
    (Ed.), *Virtual society? technology, cyperbole, reality* (pp. 153-175). London: Oxford
    University Press.
Defining and avoiding plagiarism: The Writing Program Administrators' statement on best
    practices,. (2003). Retrieved October 12, 2006, from
    http://www.ilstu.edu/~ddhesse/wpa/positions/WPAplagiarism.pdf
Kraus, J. (2002). Rethinking plagiarism: What our students are telling us when they cheat. *Issues in*
    Writing 13(1), 80-95.
Kristeva, J. (1980). *Desire in language: A Semiotic approach to literature and art.* New York:
    Columbia University Press.
Madden, M., & Rainie, L. (2003). *Music downloading, file-sharing and copyright*: Pew Internet and
    American Life Project.
Madden, M., & Rainie, L. (2005). *Music and video downloading moves beyond P2P*: Pew Internet
    and American Life Project.
Renard, L. (2000). Cut and paste 101: Plagiarism and the Net. *Educational Leadership, 57*(4), 38-
    42.
Salmons, J. E. (2006). An Overview of the Taxonomy of Collaborative E-Learning. Boulder:
    Vision2Lead, Inc.
Share, P. (2006). *Managing intertextuality: Meaning, plagiarism and power.* Paper presented at the
    2nd International Plagiarism Conference 2006, Newcastle Gateshead, UK.
Wood, G. (2004). Academic original sin: Plagiarism, the Internet, and librarians. *Journal of*
    Academic Librarianship, 30(3), 237-242.

Additional Sources Consulted:

Brookfield, S. D., & Preskill, S. (2005). Discussion: Tools and techniques for democratic
    classrooms (Second ed.). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
Carroll, J., & Appleton, J. (2001). Good practice guide to plagiarism. London: Oxford Brookes
    University.
Crook, C., & Light, P. (2002). Virtual society and the cultural practice of study. In S. Woolgar
    (Ed.), Virtual society? technology, cyperbole, reality (pp. 153-175). London: Oxford
    University Press.
Hauptman, R. (2002). Dishonesty in the academy. Academe(November-December).
Howard, R. (2002). Don't police plagiarism: just teach! Education Digest,, 67(5), 46-50.
Kelley, K., & Bonner, K. (2005). Digital Text, distance education and academic dishonesty: Faculty
    and administrator perceptions and responses. Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks
    9(1).

Lipman, M. (1993). Promoting Better Classroom Thinking. Educational Psychology, 13(3-4), 291-305.

Martin, B. (1992). Plagiarism by university students: the problem and some proposals. Tertangala (20 July - 3 August).

Martin, B. (2004). Plagiarism: policy against cheating or policy for learning? . Nexus 16(2), 15-16.

Martin, D. (2005). Plagiarism and technology: A tool for coping with plagiarism. Journal of Education for Business(January/February), 149-152.

McLafferty, C. L., & Foust, K. M. (2004). Electronic plagiarism as a college instructor's nightmare--Prevention and detection. . Journal of Education for Business, 79(3), 186-189.

Pantaleo, S. (2006). Readers and writers as intertexts: Exploring the intertextualities in student writing. Australian Journal of Language & Literacy, 29(2), 163-181.

Park, C. (2004). Rebels Without a Clause: towards an institutional framework for dealing with plagiarism by students. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 28(3), 291-306.

Procter, M. (2006). Deterring plagiarism: Some strategies Retrieved October 10, 2006, from http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagiarism.html#3

Purdy, J. (2005). Calling off the hounds: Technology and the visibility of plagiarism. Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture, 5(2), 275-295.

Renard, L. (2000). Cut and paste 101: Plagiarism and the Net. Educational Leadership, 57(4), 38-42.

Renard, L. (2005). Teaching the DIG [Digital Instate Gratification] generation. Educational Leadership, 62(7), 44-47.

Roig, M. (2001). Plagiarism and paraphrasing criteria of college and university professors. Ethics & Behavior, 11(3), 307-323.

Roig, M. (2006). Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing.

Scanlon, P. M. (2003). Student online plagiarism. College Teaching, 51(4), 161-165.

Sterngold, A. (2004). Confronting Plagiarism: How conventional teaching invites cybercheating. Change, 36(3), 16-21.

Thomas, D. A. (2004). How educators can more effectively understand and combat the plagiarism epidemic. Brigham Young University Education & Law Journal(2), 421-430.

Wood, G. (2004). Academic original sin: Plagiarism, the Internet, and librarians. Journal of Academic Librarianship, 30(3), 237-242.