

Curious about plagiarism in the news?

Academic News

In December 2004, the Chronicle of Higher Education ran a special report on plagiarism. Included here are articles about [the prevalence of plagiarism in academe](#) (including examples of plagiarized material), possible [ramifications and punishments](#) for academics and students caught plagiarizing, and the issues of [mentors plagiarizing their graduate students](#).



What happened to these alleged plagiarists? Read the follow up to December's report [here](#).

You can read additional CHE articles about [plagiarism and accreditation in Florida](#), [academic fraud in Nigeria](#), plagiarism committed by the [president of Hamilton College](#), the [moral and legal problems of plagiarism](#), [plagiarism from a cost/benefit perspective](#), and even an [assistant professor who had to prove that somebody plagiarized her dissertation!](#)

Popular News

Historians Doris Kearns Goodwin and Stephen Ambrose have both been accused of plagiarizing sources in their published material. [Slate.com](#) offers this critical view of Goodwin's work, while George Mason University's [History News Network](#) tracks the story as it developed over time. [Slate.com](#) and [Forbes.com](#) both discuss Ambrose's plagiarism, which is also tracked by GMU's [History News Network](#). Comparing these two different kinds of sources – one from the popular press and one from an academic institution – will give you a sense of how different audiences react to plagiarism.

Read about [Stephen Glass](#), who fabricated entire sources and articles for major publications such as *Rolling Stone*, *The New Republic*, and *Harper's Magazine*.

More recently, New York Times journalist [Jayson Blair](#) was caught fabricating and plagiarizing sources.

SPECIAL REPORT:
PLAGIARISM

Four Academic Plagiarists You've Never Heard Of: How Many More Are Out There?

By THOMAS BARTLETT and SCOTT SMALLWOOD

Famous scholars get the ink in good times and bad. Stephen E. Ambrose's plagiarism would not have made the news were it not for the millions of books he sold. Few people would have cared about Doris Kearns Goodwin's borrowings had they not seen her on television.

It might seem that the only academic plagiarists are famous scholars with sloppy research assistants.

But a *Chronicle* investigation proves otherwise. Among the cases we found were a political scientist who swiped five pages of his book from a journal article, a historian who cribbed from an unpublished dissertation, and a geographer whose verbatim copying appears to span his lengthy career.

While this article delves into a few cases we uncovered, our reporting suggests that what we found is not exceptional. Indeed, an editor at History News Network receives so many tips about purported plagiarism that he now investigates only those involving well-known scholars. A professor at Texas A&M International University was bombarded with hundreds of e-mail messages after writing about being plagiarized. Many of them were from graduate students and professors who believed that they, too, had been victims.

In one of the rare surveys conducted about plagiarism, two University of Alabama economists this year asked 1,200 of their colleagues if they believed their work had ever been stolen. A startling 40 percent answered yes. While not a random sample, the responses still represent hundreds of cases of alleged plagiarism.

Very few of them will ever be dragged into the sunlight. That's because academe often discourages victims from seeking justice, and when they do, tends to ignore their complaints -- a kind of scholarly "don't ask, don't tell" policy. "It's like cockroaches," says Peter Charles Hoffer, a University of Georgia historian and author of a recent book about academic fraud. "For every one you see on the kitchen floor, there are a hundred behind the stove."

Again and Again

In some cases, plagiarism can be explained away as a simple slip-up. For George O. Carney, however, lifting the words of others seems to be second nature.

Mr. Carney, now 62, grew up in the Ozarks of southern Missouri before going to graduate school at Oklahoma State University's main campus. He earned a Ph.D. in geography in 1971 and landed a job on the faculty there. He never left. Over the years, he has built a career most professors would admire -- teaching awards, a long list of publications, and a lecture series named in his honor. He is a regents professor there, which means his research has gained national recognition. He loves baseball and country music, and his field, cultural geography, has allowed him to write about both over the years.

But over the last quarter-century, Mr. Carney has taken phrases, sentences, and even entire paragraphs from numerous authors without crediting them. A close examination of several of his papers and book chapters reveals that the professor has plagiarized both frequently and brazenly. Compared with what Mr. Carney has done, the highly publicized missteps of scholars like Harvard's Laurence H. Tribe and Charles J. Ogletree Jr. seem almost trivial.

In 1979, for example, when he was an associate professor at Oklahoma State, Mr. Carney wrote a paper for the *Journal of Geography* titled "T for Texas, T for Tennessee: The Origins of American Country Music Notables." That paper is strikingly similar to "The Fertile Crescent of Country Music," by Richard A. Peterson and a co-author, published several years earlier in *The Journal of Country Music*.

The central purpose of both papers -- to examine where famous country-music performers were born -- is the same. The papers have the same structure and use the same research methods. Many of the same sources are cited in both papers, often using the same language. One of Mr. Carney's footnotes begins "For an example of this dire prediction, see ... ," which is exactly how one of the endnotes begins in Mr. Peterson's article.

In his conclusion, Mr. Carney offers five questions for further study, all of which can be found in Mr. Peterson's article. Among the most blatant borrowings is a 180-word passage that is appropriated almost verbatim, down to the random examples, the conjunctions, and the commas.

Mr. Carney never cites the "Fertile Crescent" paper. Not once.

This was not the end of his plagiarism. In a 1996 essay, Mr. Carney took several sentences from a book published a decade earlier by Bill C. Malone, a country-music historian at Tulane University. A 1999 article Mr. Carney wrote includes several paragraphs that appear to be copied from a Web site on surf music.

Last year the fourth edition of *The Sounds of People and Places*, a book on the geography of American music, was published by Rowman & Littlefield. Mr. Carney edited the book and contributed five essays. A blurb on the back cover dubs the professor "American geography's leading musicologist."

In the book, American geography's leading musicologist steals from no fewer than three authors. He even takes the very first sentence of his essay "Music and Place" from an essay a decade earlier by Salvatore J. Natoli, the former director of publications for the National Council for the Social Studies.

Mr. Carney doesn't stop there. On the following page, he takes more than 350 words from an introductory-geography textbook. Later in the same essay, along with copying still more sentences from Mr. Natoli, Mr. Carney pilfers a good-size paragraph from "Place and the Novelist," a 1980 essay by D.C.D. Pocock, then a senior lecturer at the University of Durham, in England.

The names of the three authors do not appear in the paper's list of sources. However, Mr. Carney manages to cite himself four times.

This is but a sampling of what was discovered when a handful of Mr. Carney's pieces were scrutinized. The professor has published numerous articles and book chapters over the years.

His long list of literary transgressions is troubling enough, but even more worrisome is his ability to get away with it for so long. The closest he has ever come to getting caught was when, in 1994, he lifted a couple of sentences from an essay by William W. Savage Jr., a professor of history at the University of Oklahoma. Mr. Savage complained to the editor of *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, the journal that had published Mr. Carney's work. Mr. Carney wrote a letter, published in a subsequent issue, apologizing for the "oversight."

But Mr. Carney again plagiarized the very same two sentences in the very same journal in 2001. This time there was no public contrition, although he did write a personal apology to Mr. Savage at the request of the journal's editor. "It is not my intent to plagiarize research or wording from other authors," he wrote.

When confronted by a *Chronicle* reporter with evidence of his repeated acts of plagiarism, Mr. Carney at first defends his work. He says Mr. Savage's complaints may have been motivated by "academic jealousy" or even in-state football rivalry. He also argues that claims of authorship can be difficult to sort out. "It's sort of like, 'Who had the idea first?'" Mr. Carney says.

But as more passages are read to Mr. Carney over the telephone, his hard-line stance begins to soften. "You've probably heard the old adage 'publish or perish'?" he says. "All academics are trying to get their research published. I'm not saying the ends justify the means, but maybe it's a shortcut, using someone else's words."

He goes on to say that he feels "guilty" and "professionally embarrassed."

While researching this case, we spoke to several people who knew of Mr. Carney's copying. For example, a book he had submitted to the University of Oklahoma Press was rejected because portions were obviously plagiarized, according to a source who reviewed the manuscript. Although the press turned the book down, the rejection letter made no mention of the reason for doing so.

One of Mr. Carney's victims, Richard A. Peterson, a "Fertile Crescent" author, remembers being told by a colleague that his essay had been plundered. He didn't follow up. "Then, I was thinking of my own career," says Mr. Peterson, 72, a professor emeritus of sociology at Vanderbilt University. "Now, thinking of the whole field and the ethics of the field, I would have taken the trouble."

Administrators at Oklahoma State had no inkling of Mr. Carney's numerous borrowings, according to Dale R. Lightfoot, the chairman of the geography department there. After being shown examples by *The Chronicle*, a university spokesman said officials would look into the matter.

As for Mr. Carney's motivation, he mentions that he was under a lot of pressure as a young professor. But why, after earning tenure, winning awards, and editing multiple books, would he steal the introduction to "Music and Place," an essay published just last year?

His answer is succinct: "Maybe it sounded good."

Heavy Lifting

If one scholar plagiarizes another, but everybody keeps quiet, did it really happen?

In 2002 Judy Tzu-Chun Wu came across a newly published anthology on the American West. Ms. Wu, then an assistant professor of history at Ohio State University's main campus, often wrote and taught about the American West, so she began flipping through the book. She was surprised when she saw a chapter on Margaret Chung, the first U.S.-born female Chinese doctor, who also happened to be the subject of Ms. Wu's 1998 dissertation.

"I remember thinking it was odd that someone else was working on Margaret Chung," says Ms. Wu. "I thought, How does this person's take compare to mine?"

This person -- Benson Tong, then an assistant professor of history at Wichita State University -- had a similar take. Very similar. In fact, as she read, Ms. Wu's curiosity turned into anger: The chapter was nothing more than a condensed version of her dissertation, she believed. There were phrases and descriptions that seem to have been lifted nearly verbatim, along with unattributed facts Ms. Wu had spent long hours pinning

down.

It was not that Mr. Tong had simply claimed large blocks of Ms. Wu's dissertation as his own. He cited Ms. Wu's dissertation multiple times. Those citations, however, don't tell the whole story.

Ms. Wu went through Mr. Tong's chapter word by word. She highlighted in yellow those portions of the text that were borrowed directly or altered slightly. She highlighted in green those sections that were paraphrased versions of her arguments and research. When she was finished, only one paragraph of the 15-page essay had escaped the highlighter.

But the most damning evidence could be found in the footnotes. If Mr. Tong's list of sources was to be believed, he had gone to the same archives, reviewed the same unpublished manuscripts, oral histories, and newspaper articles as Ms. Wu and then chosen to quote identical passages from that material. "Almost all of the citations in Tong's essay exactly replicate the sources and page numbers that appear in my footnotes," Ms. Wu wrote in a complaint to the American Historical Association.

Despite the compelling evidence, some of her colleagues told her to forget the matter. Pursuing it could damage another scholar's career and would no doubt be a long, exhausting process.

Ms. Wu ignored their advice. She submitted a 21-page complaint to the association and wrote a letter to Scholarly Resources Inc., the publisher of Mr. Tong's book. Mr. Tong offered a rebuttal to Ms. Wu's charges, and Ms. Wu countered with a response of her own, again laying out the evidence against him. She describes the experience as "emotionally draining."

The process was difficult and tiresome, just as some of her colleagues had predicted. In the end, the historical association ruled in her favor, finding that Mr. Tong "appears to have borrowed most of his research and overall analytical framework from Ms. Wu's work without sufficiently indicating the extent of his indebtedness." The group concluded that Mr. Tong had indeed committed plagiarism. Not long after, the association stopped investigating plagiarism cases, saying it was not a good use of its resources.

As was the association's custom, it sent a letter to Ms. Wu and Mr. Tong informing them of its decision about Ms. Wu's complaint. There was no press release, no notice on the association's Web site. Today, more than a year afterward, the association won't even confirm that it conducted an investigation.

As a result, Ms. Wu felt it was her responsibility to publicize the findings. She had the chairman of her department fax the association's letter to the chairman of the history department at Wichita State.

That was particularly bad timing for Mr. Tong, who was coming up for tenure. He was turned down. After sticking around Wichita State for another year, he was hired by

Gallaudet University.

When contacted recently at the university, Mr. Tong asks the caller to hold on while he closes his office door. He contends that he "didn't make any mistakes" in the essay and says he refuted Ms. Wu's allegations. When asked if he was guilty of plagiarism, he responds, "No, I don't think so at all."

However, he declined to discuss any details, saying the matter had already been put to rest. When asked whether his new employer was aware of the historical association's finding, he said: "I guess they know about it. The word does get around."

Apparently word had not gotten around to the chairman of the government and history department at Gallaudet, Russell Olson. Upon being told that a newly hired member of his department had been found guilty of plagiarism, Mr. Olson groans. When asked if this came as a surprise, Mr. Olson answers, "Total." He went on to say he would "do something" but declined to be more specific.

Except for acknowledging the receipt of her first letter, the publisher of Mr. Tong's book never responded to Ms. Wu's letters and e-mail messages. This year Scholarly Resources was acquired by Rowman & Littlefield. Kelly Rogers, the director of permissions at the publisher, was unaware of the plagiarism charge. "I would be the person who would know," she says.

As for Ms. Wu, she feels somewhat vindicated by the historical association's ruling. Still, she remains frustrated that Mr. Tong's book has never been retracted. "It's still out there," she says.

Her dissertation is scheduled to be published next year by the University of California Press. Ms. Wu worries that Mr. Tong might even be asked to review her book. After all, he's written on the same subject.

Keeping Quiet

As the Tong case illustrates, charges of blatant plagiarism often do not follow professors to their next job. Without a public outing, how could they? Donald Cuccioletta, a historian who taught at two universities, even managed to get caught by one institution but kept the news from the other.

In 2001 Mr. Cuccioletta edited a book called *L'Américanité et Les Amériques*. He also wrote a chapter for the book, which includes articles in both English and French. His begins: "The idea that the Americas -- North and South -- have a shared common historical experience is not a recent discourse."

That mirrors the first sentence of the introduction to *Do the Americas Have a Common History?*, a 1964 book written by Lewis Hanke, a Columbia University historian. Mr. Hanke began: "The idea that the Americas -- North and South -- have shared a common

historical experience developed slowly in the nineteenth century."

Mr. Hanke follows that sentence with a long quote from a former president of the American Historical Association. Mr. Cuccioletta uses the same long quote.

Mr. Hanke then, in two sentences and 85 words, briefly summarizes contacts between burgeoning Western Hemisphere independence movements in the early 19th century. So does Mr. Cuccioletta -- with nearly the exact same 86 words (he uses an extra "that").

Mr. Hanke then quotes from what he calls a "blunt statement" from 1821 in the "influential" *North American Review*. Mr. Cuccioletta quotes from the same "influential" journal, although he describes it as a "blunt review." Mr. Cuccioletta uses the same 186 words from the same 1821 journal article, complete with two elisions in the exact same spots.

Mr. Cuccioletta does not directly cite Mr. Hanke, who died in 1993, although he does include his book among the 28 items listed in the bibliography.

A history professor at the University of Quebec, where Mr. Cuccioletta had taught as a part-time lecturer for 10 years, discovered the similarities in the two books in 2002, according to *Le Devoir*, a Montreal newspaper.

After the department chairman learned of the alleged plagiarism, according to the newspaper, Mr. Cuccioletta was not rehired. But the news did not travel 60 miles down the highway, where Mr. Cuccioletta was also teaching at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.

Mr. Cuccioletta has taught at Plattsburgh off and on for the past seven years. This year -- two years after his borrowing was first caught at the University of Quebec -- he was named interim director of Plattsburgh's new Institute on Quebec Studies.

Then his secret got out. Officials at Plattsburgh learned of the purported plagiarism when it was briefly recounted in *Le Devoir* this fall.

Now an administrative committee has begun an investigation. And a college spokesman says Mr. Cuccioletta has been removed as interim director, although he is still teaching his courses for the semester.

Mr. Cuccioletta says the matter was dealt with at the University of Quebec and that he has admitted his mistake. "I'm still troubled by it," he says. "I just got confused. I was writing many articles at the time." Then he stops speaking, saying he is not going to discuss the incident any further. "To me, it's a closed subject."

A Surprising Discovery

Like many students at Harvard University last December, Todd Fine was frantically

trying to finish the proposal for his senior thesis. Sitting on his futon with piles of books about Libya and foreign policy around him, he began skimming *European Crisis Management in the 1980s*, a 1996 book by Neil Winn, a professor at the University of Leeds, in England.

Interested in some of its theoretical aspects, Mr. Fine found related articles in an online database. One of them, however -- a 1992 paper in the *International Studies Quarterly* -- seemed familiar.

Mr. Fine searched the two texts. Five pages -- more than 1,100 words -- of the introduction to Mr. Winn's book were essentially identical to the journal article. Mr. Winn did little more than switch to the occasional British spelling. For example, "crystallize" became "crystallise." With the exception of those and other extremely minor changes, the words were the same.

Discoveries of plagiarism often turn on this kind of happenstance. Seven years had passed since Mr. Winn wrote his monograph. Had a Harvard student not typed in just the right phrase and then been curious enough to compare the texts, seven more years might have passed without anyone noticing the copying.

Mr. Fine, the Harvard senior, told his father, a sociologist at Northwestern University, who then e-mailed the article's author, Steven G. Livingston, an associate professor of political science at Middle Tennessee State University.

Mr. Livingston calls it "weird and depressing" to read his words between the covers of someone else's book. He immediately contacted the International Studies Association, since the original article had appeared in one of its journals. Officials there said he should go to Blackwell Publishing, the company that produces the journal.

The runaround continued. Blackwell told him that the company stays out of such disputes. He was advised to go to a professional organization and get a finding of plagiarism. So he went back to the International Studies Association. "They were genuinely sympathetic," he says. "But they said, 'We don't want to get into judging issues of plagiarism.'"

Thomas J. Volgy, the association's executive director, declined to talk about the details of Mr. Livingston's case. He says the group did not have the money and could not take on the risk of adjudicating individual cases of plagiarism. Victims have a "whole range of other mechanisms" to use rather than turning to a professional association, Mr. Volgy says, pointing out that they can file a lawsuit or complain to the plagiarist's university.

Mr. Winn declined to talk about the copying. In the end he has had to face up to the incident, although to what degree is unclear. While a University of Leeds official declined to speak to *The Chronicle* about the case, administrators have told Mr. Livingston that Mr. Winn is being disciplined.

Mr. Livingston says he would be disappointed if all Mr. Winn received was a letter telling him not to plagiarize. "It took years for me to write that article," Mr. Livingston says. "And when it shows up sentence for sentence in someone else's book, I couldn't walk away from it."

Whatever the punishment, it stopped short of firing. Mr. Winn remains on the faculty at Leeds. And that book, the one with five plagiarized pages in the introduction, is still listed on his university Web page.

In the end, Mr. Livingston can't believe how difficult it was to persuade others to take action, even when the words -- all 1,100 of them -- were clearly stolen. Neither can Gary Alan Fine, whose son Todd first stumbled upon the plagiarism. "If a professional organization won't stand up and say that this is wrong," he says, "what message does this give to my son?"

Stealing someone's words isn't the same as stealing someone's television. The original author doesn't have to run to Best Buy to get a new paragraph.

But ideas and words are professors' stock and trade. Unlike the company president who steals sentences for a Rotary Club speech, or the congressman who pilfers phrases for a campaign brochure, the professor who plagiarizes undermines his very profession.

Yet academe appears conflicted about what to do about the plagiarist. While they preach against the sin, many scholars seem wary of confronting the sinners. Even Mr. Hoffer, the Georgia professor who writes about academic fraud, is hesitant about naming names.

Indeed, several sources questioned whether *The Chronicle* really planned to identify those accused of plagiarism in this article. "You could ruin careers," they said. Yet isn't that the attitude that allows serial plagiarists like George Carney to go undetected for decades? Cases are permitted to hide in the shadows, shielded under the guise of "confidential personnel matters." If plagiarists are academe's cockroaches, as Mr. Hoffer put it, is everyone just too scared to look behind the stove?

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SPECIAL REPORT:
PLAGIARISM

The Price of Plagiarism

By DAVID GLENN

Plagiarism can arouse deep-seated anger and moral passion. William J. Cronon, a historian at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, casually uses the phrase "sixth circle of hell" when describing his feelings about how one particular species of plagiarist (the faculty mentor who pilfers ideas from graduate students) should be punished.

In Dante's schema, residents of the sixth circle are confined in burning tombs -- but universities might run afoul of environmental laws if they set up such things on their quads. So what are some more-plausible punishments for convicted plagiarists?

- Colleges and universities can, of course, deny tenure to, or terminate the employment of, a faculty member for egregious violations of ethical standards. There are also the lesser penalties of demotion, salary reduction, and prohibitions on serving as a principal investigator. (One caution: Each of those potential sanctions should be clearly spelled out in the faculty handbook, lest the institution find itself on the wrong side of a breach-of-contract lawsuit.)
- Journals and presses can refuse to consider a plagiarist's future submissions for a certain period of time, or for a lifetime. When serious plagiarism is detected in a published work, most scholarly journals will also remove the offending article from electronic databases.
- Scholarly associations can publicize an offender's wrongdoing or kick him or her out of the organization. If the perpetrator is a lawyer, psychologist, or some other sort of professional, he or she might also face a loss of licensure. (It appears that state bar associations have never censured or disbarred a law professor for purely scholarly plagiarism, but they could, in theory, since plagiarism violates the lawyer's ethical pledge to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.)
- Lawsuits might be filed against accused plagiarists on a variety of grounds. In a 2002 law-review article, Stuart P. Green of Louisiana State University at Baton Rouge described a number of civil actions that might successfully be filed against scholarly plagiarists. (Mr. Green hopes no one will ever actually attempt these arguments; he strongly prefers that plagiarism be dealt with out of court.)

In certain situations, perpetrators can be sued for copyright infringement. It is also plausible, Mr. Green says, that plagiarists could be sued on grounds of unfair competition, under the legal doctrine known as "reverse palming off." If a local diner bought a boxful of McDonald's hamburgers and then resold them as if they were the diner's own product, it could be sued for reverse palming off. Mr. Green believes that plagiarists are in similar legal jeopardy.

- Prosecution under criminal laws is a farfetched possibility, but not impossible. Such a prosecution could take either of two forms: In a case of verbatim plagiarism, a district attorney could bring a charge of copyright violation.

And -- more remotely -- it is possible that a court might permit a plagiarist to be prosecuted for theft. One key question here, Mr. Green argues, is whether the victim's loss (that is, the loss of reputation that stems from not receiving proper credit for one's ideas) constitutes a "thing of value" under the doctrine of theft.

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Section: Special Report

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SPECIAL REPORT:
PLAGIARISM

Mentor vs. Protégé

The professor published the student's words as his own. What's wrong with that?

By THOMAS BARTLETT and SCOTT SMALLWOOD

Dwayne D. Kirk was proud of his paper, and with good reason: It was the first time his name -- and his name alone -- had appeared atop a scholarly article. He had spent two months doing research and writing, carefully considering each example, weighing every word. Now, after all that work, here was something, he says, that he could "really call my own."

So he was understandably taken aback when, a year later, he saw his words below someone else's name. And not just a sentence or two, but paragraph after paragraph, all lifted verbatim.

What's more, the scholar who had appropriated his work was his mentor, Charles J. Arntzen, a professor of plant biology at Arizona State University at Tempe. Mr. Arntzen, 63, is a pioneer in the creation of edible vaccines, a member of the National Academy of Sciences, and a former member of the editorial board at the journal *Science*. In 2001 he was appointed by President Bush to the President's Council on Science and Technology.

Mr. Kirk, in contrast, is a 33-year-old graduate student whose career has barely begun.

This confrontation -- which until now has been going on behind closed doors -- is about authorship and giving credit where it is due. But like many other cases of alleged plagiarism, it is also about the power that a senior scholar can wield over a younger colleague.

When the Harvard University law professors Charles J. Ogletree Jr. and Laurence H. Tribe were caught plagiarizing this fall, they immediately pointed to oversights by their research assistants. Yet far more common than research assistants' getting the blame for a professor's plagiarism are the graduate students fuming quietly about their work's being swiped by a mentor.

One reason for their silence is fear of retribution. After all, graduate students depend on professors to help advance their careers. Indeed, after filing his complaint, Mr. Kirk

writes in an e-mail message, he now understands "why other people who face these kinds of situations choose not to make their grievances known."

Cutting and Pasting

Before charges of plagiarism soured their relationship, Mr. Kirk and Mr. Arntzen were close colleagues, even friends. When Mr. Arntzen was president of the Boyce-Thompson Institute, a nonprofit research organization affiliated with Cornell University, he hired Mr. Kirk as a research specialist. From the beginning, Mr. Kirk impressed his boss. "He's a very bright guy," Mr. Arntzen says.

Mr. Arntzen left Boyce-Thompson for Arizona State in 2000. Three years later Mr. Kirk followed him, accepting a paid position as a researcher at the university and enrolling in the graduate biology program. The professor had written a letter of recommendation for Mr. Kirk, and the two had discussed the possibility of Mr. Arntzen's serving as his adviser. Mr. Kirk acknowledges that the professor "has certainly played a big role in promoting my career."

The aura of mutual admiration began to fade in July 2003. That's when Mr. Kirk discovered that Mr. Arntzen had copied large portions of his paper without his permission. About one-third of Mr. Arntzen's article -- which was published as a chapter in the 2004 book *Vaccines: Preventing Disease and Protecting Health* -- was taken directly from Mr. Kirk's paper, which was published two years before in the book *Genetically Modified Foods*. The graduate student's paper was not cited, but Mr. Arntzen did mention Mr. Kirk among the dozen people he thanked in the acknowledgements.

Mr. Arntzen does not deny copying Mr. Kirk's paper. He says that he "did some cutting and pasting," and that the practice is common in scientific circles. (In fact, most of the passages not taken from Mr. Kirk's paper come from an article that Mr. Arntzen wrote with another Arizona State researcher.)

The professor wrote his chapter over one weekend, he says, adding that borrowing passages is a way to "conserve energy." He felt justified in doing so, he says, because Mr. Kirk is a member of his research team and members often share materials with each other. Mr. Arntzen also argues that because his paper was not a peer-reviewed article, the standards for plagiarism are different.

Not so, says Mark S. Frankel, director of the program on scientific freedom, responsibility, and law at the American Association for the Advancement of Science. "The idea that it's in a book instead of a peer-reviewed article is a poor excuse and one that's unacceptable," he says. "Generally speaking, having one-third of your published work come from someone else without permission is a good case for a plagiarism charge."

As for Mr. Arntzen's contention that what he did is common in science, that may be true, but that still doesn't make it OK, says Marcel C. LaFollette, author of *Stealing Into Print*:

Fraud, Plagiarism, and Misconduct in Scientific Publishing. "If they are other people's words, you are under an obligation, whether you are a scientist or a historian, to use quotation marks."

Getting at the Truth

There are two versions of what happened in this case -- Mr. Kirk's and Mr. Arntzen's -- and those versions are substantially different.

According to Mr. Kirk, beginning in August 2003, he and the professor discussed the matter many times over several months but were "unable to agree on a resolution."

That's not Mr. Arntzen's story. He says he immediately agreed to list Mr. Kirk as a co-author. "We agreed that when the galley proofs came, I would change the authorship," he says. Unfortunately, says Mr. Arntzen, the publisher did not provide prepublication galleys of the article.

There was no such agreement, according to Mr. Kirk. In addition, the editor of the book about vaccines, *Ciro A. de Quadros*, insists that Mr. Arntzen *was* provided with a copy of the article before it was published. "He saw the paper," says Mr. de Quadros. "He can't be blaming me for that."

After the book was published, Mr. Arntzen says he called Mr. de Quadros and asked him to insert a correction that would add the names of Mr. Kirk and two other colleagues to the list of authors. "I called him up," says Mr. Arntzen. "I said, 'Ciro, there's a concern.'"

That's not what happened, according to Mr. Kirk. He says he sent the editor an e-mail message informing him that the chapter contained plagiarized material. Only after he told Mr. de Quadros what had happened did Mr. Arntzen agree to make a change, Mr. Kirk says.

The editor backs up Mr. Kirk's version. He says he first heard about the matter from Mr. Kirk. "I called Charlie and said, 'What's going on? You put us in a bad position,'" Mr. de Quadros says.

After challenging Mr. Arntzen, Mr. Kirk says, he began to be cut out of important research projects at Arizona State. This fall he filed a formal complaint against Mr. Arntzen with the university. An investigation is being conducted, but a spokesman for Arizona State declines to comment on its progress.

Few Fight Back

Disagreements between senior and junior scholars occur all the time. Often, though, junior scholars keep their complaints to themselves because they see little to gain from challenging their bosses. When they do complain, it usually means appealing to administrators who have worked with those same senior scholars for years.

Among the few to fight back and win is Carolyn R. Phinney, a psychology researcher at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. She charged that a professor there had fraudulently used her ideas to get a federal grant. After years of legal battles, she won a \$1.67-million settlement from the university.

More common is what happened to Sheng-Ming Ma, a graduate student in mathematics at Columbia University. He was kicked out of graduate school and took a job making sandwiches at Subway after unsuccessfully trying to stop a professor from publishing a proof that Mr. Ma said he had devised. He sued, but the case was dismissed.

Antonia Demas argued for years that a professor of nutrition at Cornell University was unfairly taking credit for her ideas about an elementary-school nutrition curriculum. The professor even claimed as his own awards that Ms. Demas had won. After the case received national attention, she heard from dozens of graduate students around the country with similar complaints (*The Chronicle*, April 12, 2002).

Some critics of the heavy use of research assistants have suggested that changing the culture surrounding published acknowledgements might help. Instead of just thanking assistants, scholars should explain clearly what work they did.

Yet, particularly in science labs, graduate students are just extensions of the senior scholars rather than researchers in their own right. Richard C. Lewontin, an emeritus professor of biology at Harvard, recently chastised scientists in general for a "pervasive dishonesty" that allows researchers to take credit for work they did not do.

"Regardless of the actual involvement of the laboratory director in the intellectual and physical work of a research project," Mr. Lewontin wrote in the *New York Review of Books*, "he or she has unchallenged intellectual-property rights in the project, much as a lord had unchallenged property rights in the product of serfs or peasants occupying dependent lands."

Mr. Arntzen continues to argue that he had the right to use Mr. Kirk's words without his permission. The charge of plagiarism hit him "like a brick," he says, adding that he considers the controversy to be nothing more than a personal misunderstanding.

He is willing to concede, however, that in many cases "the mentor doesn't fully appreciate the independence the person they're mentoring has come to feel for themselves." Even after Mr. Kirk accused him of plagiarism, the professor still has nothing but praise for his protégé.

"He's excellent," says Mr. Arntzen. "He writes very well."

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SPECIAL REPORT:
PLAGIARISM

Just Deserts?

Plagiarizing professors face a variety of punishments

By THOMAS BARTLETT and SCOTT SMALLWOOD

Discovering that someone copied is just the beginning. When a professor is suspected of plagiarizing another scholar's work, the matter usually is assigned to an investigative committee, reports are written, and some sanction may be imposed. Meanwhile, the victim who brought the matter to everyone's attention is often left wondering whether it was worth the hassle.

In a [special report](#) in December, *The Chronicle* reported on several suspected plagiarists: a cultural geographer, a political scientist, a biologist, and two historians. In some of those cases, universities have since concluded investigations and punished the plagiarists. Two have lost their jobs, another has been removed from the classroom. But not every academic plagiarist is shown the door. In one case, for instance, a university committee agreed that plagiarism had occurred but decided that no action was necessary.

Barred From the Classroom

Over a 36-year period, George O. Carney swiped passages from numerous authors without crediting them. In one case, the professor of geography at Oklahoma State University's main campus took a 350-word passage nearly verbatim from a source he never cited. In another paper, he borrowed the structure, language, and most of the footnotes from an article he didn't even mention.

None of that hurt his career. Mr. Carney was made a regents professor at Oklahoma State, a distinction given to faculty members whose scholarship has received national recognition. And his work did receive national attention: Mr. Carney was once referred to as "American geography's leading musicologist."

After *The Chronicle* reported on Mr. Carney's borrowings, Oklahoma State investigated and came to the conclusion that Mr. Carney was indeed guilty of plagiarism. The university barred him from the classroom and stripped him of his regents title. He did not appeal the decision. In addition, Mr. Carney's book, *The Sounds of People and Places*, was declared out of print by its publisher, Rowman & Littlefield, because it contains several lengthy passages that Mr. Carney had plagiarized. A secretary in the geography department said the professor was "in the process of retiring."

In an interview last year, Mr. Carney acknowledged that he might have plagiarized from others and said that he felt "professionally embarrassed." However, the *Tulsa World* later reported that Mr. Carney said he wasn't sure if he had committed plagiarism and called the university's penalties "a little bit harsh."

Out of a Job

For several years, Donald Cuccioletta continued to teach at the State University of New York at Plattsburgh even though another university 60 miles away in Canada had let his contract expire after charges of plagiarism surfaced.

Now the copying has caught up with him.

In 2001 Mr. Cuccioletta edited a book called *L'Américanité et les Amériques*. In a chapter he wrote for the book, the first few pages appear to be copied from the introduction to a 1964 book, *Do the Americas Have a Common History?*, by Lewis Hanke, a Columbia University historian.

When another history professor at the University of Quebec discovered the similarities in 2002, Mr. Cuccioletta was not rehired. He had been a part-time lecturer there for 10 years. Nevertheless, he kept working as an adjunct professor of history at Plattsburgh, where he has taught on and off for the past seven years. And in 2004 he was named interim director of the university's new Institute on Quebec Studies.

In the fall, administrators at Plattsburgh learned of the alleged plagiarism from a brief article in *Le Devoir*, a Montreal newspaper.

A misconduct committee investigated the charges and "basically, his contract was not extended after the fall-2004 semester," says Keith Tyo, executive assistant to Plattsburgh's president. Mr. Cuccioletta was removed as interim director, although he was allowed to continue to teach his courses for the fall. He is now not employed by the university in any capacity, Mr. Tyo says.

"We were surprised by the situation when we learned of it," he says. "But I think we acted appropriately."

Mr. Tyo says the university was also reviewing its procedures and policies regarding academic misconduct -- a review that had been planned before news of Mr. Cuccioletta's borrowings broke.

Attempts to reach Mr. Cuccioletta were unsuccessful. In December he told *The Chronicle* that he had admitted his mistake, was troubled by it, and chalked it up to confusion caused by writing many articles at one time.

A Hollow Victory

When Dwayne D. Kirk discovered that his paper had been plagiarized, he decided to fight back. The decision was not easy. For one thing, Mr. Kirk is a graduate student and the person who stole his work is a professor. What's more, the professor was his mentor.

Last year Mr. Kirk filed a complaint against Charles J. Arntzen, a professor of plant biology at Arizona State University at Tempe. Mr. Arntzen is a pioneer in the creation of edible vaccines, a former editorial-board member at the journal *Science*, and a member of the National Academy of Sciences. He was also appointed by President Bush to the President's Council on Science and Technology in 2001.

About one-third of a book chapter Mr. Arntzen wrote had been published two years earlier in a paper by Mr. Kirk. The professor acknowledged that he "did some cutting and pasting" but said that he was entitled to use Mr. Kirk's work because they were part of the same research team. Mr. Kirk disagreed and said he had complained before Mr. Arntzen's chapter was even published.

The two differ on what happened next. Mr. Arntzen says he contacted the editor of the book after it was published and asked him to add Mr. Kirk's name. Mr. Kirk says he was the first to call the editor and that Mr. Arntzen agreed to make the change only after it came to the editor's attention. The editor of the book, Ciro A. de Quadros, backs up Mr. Kirk's version of events. Eventually Mr. Kirk's name was added to the chapter.

In January Arizona State completed its investigation of the matter and wrote that the evidence "supports a finding of plagiarism," according to a copy of the decision obtained by *The Chronicle*. However, it went on to say that "much of the work in question arose during a previous collaborative relationship." It appears that no action will be taken by the university against Mr. Arntzen.

That sends a confused message, according to Mark S. Frankel, director of the program on scientific freedom, responsibility, and law at the American Association for the Advancement of Science. "If you find that plagiarism occurred, it seems to me that it warrants some action," Mr. Frankel says. He also worries that the ruling suggests to students that "oh, OK, if I get caught then maybe I can redo the paper and add the footnote that should have been there. And then everything will be OK."

Mr. Kirk, who spent months complaining to Mr. Arntzen and the university before going public, agrees. "From the beginning, it was stressed how serious they were taking this, and this doesn't seem to be a very serious result," he says. "Plagiarism seems to be OK if you can fix it with co-authorship after the fact."

An Arizona State official says it is "a confidential personnel matter."

Says Mr. Kirk: "I'm surprised at how ethics didn't seem that important in the end."

Is It Ever Over?

In early 2004, a Harvard University undergraduate stumbled onto a case of plagiarism while working on his senior-thesis proposal. He noticed that a section of a 1996 book by Neil Winn, a professor at the University of Leeds, in England, was nearly identical to part of a 1992 paper by Steven G. Livingston, an associate professor of political science at Middle Tennessee State University.

The student contacted Mr. Livingston, who was shocked to find five pages of his paper reproduced nearly verbatim in someone else's book. There were only a few telltale changes in the copy -- for instance, some of the words now had British spellings ("crystallize" became "crystallise," for example). He found it all "weird and depressing."

Mr. Livingston contacted the International Studies Association. They told him to contact Blackwell Publishing, the company that produces the journal that published his article. Blackwell sent him back to the association. Everyone was sympathetic but reluctant at first to get involved in the case. But Mr. Livingston pressed on.

He contacted the University of Leeds, which began an investigation. The university later said it had disciplined Mr. Winn; he remains a professor there. In December Mr. Livingston's publisher, Blackwell, sent a letter to the publisher of Mr. Winn's book (Blackwell has declined to release the letter). The issue still has not been resolved, according to Mr. Livingston. (Incidentally, a new book by Mr. Winn, *European Intelligence Cooperation Beyond the Nation-State* (Sussex Academic Press), is scheduled to be published this year.)

What's the message here? For Mr. Livingston, perhaps it is that fighting a plagiarist can be a draining and time-consuming ordeal. "You never know when you're at the end of it," he says. Even so, the professor says he doesn't regret pressing his case: "Doing nothing -- that would have been worse."

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<http://chronicle.com/daily/2004/12/2004120904n.htm>

Edward Waters College Loses Accreditation Following Plagiarism Scandal

By [BURTON BOLLAG](#)

Edward Waters College had its accreditation revoked this week, two months after an investigation by a local newspaper, in Jacksonville, Fla., revealed that the institution had plagiarized large parts of a document submitted to its accreditor, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Edward Waters, which has struggled against various setbacks in recent years, said it would appeal the decision. "This appears to be, and is, a state of emergency," the college's president, Jimmy R. Jenkins Sr., told a standing-room-only meeting of faculty members and students on Tuesday, a day after the accrediting agency made decisions about Edward Waters and other institutions. "But it's not the end. This is a new beginning."

Mr. Jenkins tried to paint a positive gloss on the crisis. "Trust us," he said in the half-hour meeting, "this was, and is, a great lesson for the college, and one that will make us a better institution in the years to come."

The bad news arrived during examinations week, after which the college's 1,300 students will go home for the holiday break. Mr. Jenkins acknowledged to the Jacksonville newspaper, *The Florida Times-Union*, that some students might decide not to return for the spring term. But he insisted that the historically black institution would continue operating normally and that it would retain its accreditation while appealing the ruling.

If Edward Waters loses its appeal, the effect would be devastating because its students would become ineligible for federal aid and for scholarships from the United Negro College Fund. More than 90 percent of Edward Waters students receive financial assistance.

The damaging document submitted to the accrediting agency, a Quality Enhancement Plan, appears to contain large sections copied from one produced by Alabama A&M University. It appears even to pass off detailed statistical information on Alabama A&M as belonging to Edward Waters.

When the plagiarism was disclosed by the *Times-Union*, Mr. Jenkins admitted that the copying had taken place but blamed it on a senior administrator who has since left the college. The incident revealed a lack of supervision by the institution, he said, but not a lack of integrity.

A college spokeswoman, Phyllis Bell-Davis, described the copying as "an oversight."

Edward Waters was due for a periodic review by the accrediting agency, known as SACS, next June. But President Jenkins and other senior administrators were summoned to meet with SACS officials in Atlanta this month to answer questions about the document. They apparently were unable to convince the agency that the copying was an innocent mistake.

On the trip back to Jacksonville, Mr. Jenkins and his staff stopped in Tallahassee, where Gov. Jeb Bush stepped out of a session of the State Legislature to meet with them briefly. Mr. Jenkins said Mr. Bush, a Republican, offered his support in the college's efforts to regain accreditation.

Edward Waters, which was founded in 1866 to educate newly freed slaves, has been on a bumpy road in recent years. It was put on probation for a while in the mid-1990s for low enrollment and financial problems. Mr. Jenkins, who took over as president in 1997, is credited with raising enrollment, from 319 then to 1,300 today, as well as eliminating a large debt.

This past spring, the college drew unwanted publicity when it fired five senior administrators in what it called a "restructuring." One of the five said they had been given no reasons for their dismissal, but alleged that they had been forced out to prevent them from disciplining a popular student accused of deleting failing grades from her transcript ([The Chronicle](#), June 25).

In other accrediting actions this week, the Southern Association placed three institutions on probation. Huntingdon College, in Montgomery, Ala., and Talladega College, in Talladega, Ala., were penalized for financial problems. Louisiana College, a Baptist institution in Pineville, La., was disciplined for problems in its governance and academic freedom ([The Chronicle](#), April 16).

In addition, Enterprise-Ozark Community College, in Enterprise, Ala., was placed on warning, a less severe sanction than probation, after the accrediting agency rejected the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan.

The Southern Association also released two institutions from sanctions. The University of West Alabama, in Livingston, Ala., was taken off probation, which had been imposed last December because of infighting among and micromanagement by trustees ([The Chronicle](#), January 1). The Atlanta campus of American InterContinental University, a for-profit institution owned by the Career Education Corporation, was taken off warning ([The Chronicle](#), July 16).

<http://chronicle.com/daily/2004/11/2004110104n.htm>

Nigerian University Revokes Thousands of Diplomas in Crackdown on Academic Fraud

By [WACHIRA KIGOTHO](#)

Nairobi

The University of Port Harcourt, in southeastern Nigeria, has revoked the degrees of 7,254 of its graduates in a major crackdown on academic fraud.

The head of the university, Nimi Briggs, said that those stripped of their degrees had either cheated on examinations or falsified their academic records, and that the fraud dated back to the class that entered in 1996.

He said that higher education in Nigeria is rife with corruption and that many students had been admitted into universities with falsified secondary-school certificates. Speaking before the National Universities Commission, which registers new colleges in Nigeria, Mr. Briggs said the quality of degrees and diplomas awarded by Nigerian universities had been eroded by academic fraud and corruption.

Nigerian universities must fight the "vice," he said, or their "legitimate certificates will be rejected internationally."

Mr. Briggs called for an end to academic fraud at all Nigerian universities and said that he has imposed a zero-tolerance policy at Port Harcourt. "Some students have confessed to wrongdoing, begged the university for mercy, and praised the efforts to sanitize the system," he said. "The crackdown will continue to unearth other graduates and students who may have been admitted to the university through unfair means."

Peter Okebukola, head of the National Universities Commission, said the strong demand for a college education in Nigeria had intensified academic fraud there.

According to a recent report by the Exams Ethics Project, a nongovernmental organization that monitors academic testing in Nigeria, cheating on examinations, particularly college-entrance examinations, is widespread. "Academic fraud and corruption is a big business in Nigeria," says the report.

Plagiarism: a Lie of the Mind

By MAURICE ISSERMAN

In announcing his resignation as president of Hamilton College last fall, Eugene Tobin apologized for a number of instances in which he had used plagiarized material in speeches he had delivered in the nine years since assuming office. That the college's chief executive did not use the occasion to quibble over definitions of plagiarism, or offer extenuating circumstances to excuse his actions, is entirely to his credit. He did the right thing in resigning, and he did the right thing in the way he resigned. The incident, however, raised fundamental questions about what exactly constitutes plagiarism, and how Hamilton and other colleges should think about dealing with it.

When the semester started in September, plagiarism was one of the few topics that everyone on our normally contentious campus seemed to agree about. Plagiarism was seen as a transgression against our common intellectual values, carrying justifiably bad consequences for those guilty of the practice.

It was a lot easier, however, to be "anti-plagiarism" when the only people we knew of who had ever received significant public attention about it were distant strangers -- the Stephen Ambroses and Doris Kearns Goodwins we would occasionally read about in the newspapers and shake our heads over. In the anguished aftermath of President Tobin's resignation, we at Hamilton were forced to confront the issue of plagiarism in a way that left our earlier consensus shaken. It wasn't a best-selling author, but one of our own -- a leader, a teacher, a mentor, a friend, a colleague -- who was up there confessing to plagiarism and suffering serious professional consequences.

Anti-plagiarism sentiments now clashed with feelings of loyalty to and compassion for a particular human being whom we cared for, someone whose house we passed every time we drove up the long hill that leads to this upstate New York campus. The Hamilton style guide, *Essentials of Writing*, issued by the college's writing center, states unequivocally that "Plagiarism is a form of fraud. You plagiarize if you present other writers' words or ideas as your own." But some of us who teach at the college have begun to wonder if a strict adherence to the standards proclaimed in the handbook might be self-righteous, vindictive, and pointless.

I remain a great admirer of *Essentials of Writing*. But at 60-odd pages, with the burden of discussing every rule of good writing from promoting the "active voice" to discouraging "wordiness," it necessarily moves forward with a certain relentless efficiency. Is plagiarism truly as black-and-white as the handbook describes it? Where do we draw the line between fair and fraudulent uses of others' words and ideas? Isn't there a big gray area? And if we are all guilty of straying into that gray area of unintentional plagiarism, haven't we forfeited the right to judge others, including those whose plagiarism may have been more purposeful?

Such questions require something more than a one- or two-sentence formula to settle. To

understand what plagiarism *is*, it seems to me that it might be useful to spend some time examining what plagiarism *is not*.

Plagiarism is not the failure to be strikingly original in every combination of words we utter or set down on paper, an impossible and even an undesirable goal. The greatest prophets in human history have always understood that effective communication requires that the original be couched in the familiar; think of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech ("I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream..."). What is true in high oratory is equally true in common conversation. Usually, when we repeat what others have said or written before us, we don't have the slightest notion that we're doing so, nor do we have any idea to whom we are indebted for the words we recycle.

Leaf through a reference book like Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* and you'll quickly see how many common phrases in your own vocabulary you owe to William Shakespeare and the King James Version of the Bible. (Did you know that "last gasp" was Shakespeare's? Or that "wit's end" is from the Old Testament?) Nor are all our sources long dead and buried. The Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith seldom receives the credit he deserves for coining the expression "conventional wisdom" (meaning a fact, theory, or interpretation that won't hold up under careful re-examination) just a few decades back.

But as Galbraith, Shakespeare, and whoever we wish to consider the author of the Bible would surely agree, the price of being a successful phrasemaker is that your ownership of the original is soon forgotten. The words in question become part of our language's common currency (as I wrote that, I wondered who came up with the immensely useful phrase "common currency" -- perhaps another economist?). Using "conventional wisdom" or "last gasp" or "wit's end" in a speech or in a paper may lay you open to the charge of cliché-mongering; it does not constitute plagiarism.

Even the conscious use of someone else's words doesn't necessarily descend to the level of plagiarism if the words in question are clearly intended as an allusion to some source with which everyone -- speaker and listener, writer and reader -- can reasonably be presumed to be familiar. When I force my children to consume some item on their dinner plates that they find distasteful -- say a brussels sprout -- they are likely to declare with heavy irony as they choke down the item in question, "Mmmm, crunchy frog."

Crunchy frog? Well, they know that I know that they're alluding to the Monty Python "Finest Crunchy Raw Unboned Real Dead Frog" sketch. They are not required to add "Graham Chapman et al., *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, Episode 6 from Season 1" as a verbal footnote (although they probably could, if challenged).

Repeating the words of those who came before us is essential to intellectual endeavor. In the academic world, we are links in a great chain of teaching. Or, to mix metaphors, we are all "standing on the shoulders of giants" (a phrase commonly attributed to Sir Isaac Newton to explain how he came to his insights into the inner workings of the physical

world; apparently, Newton himself was simply borrowing what was a common phrase in the 17th century). I owe this example to Thomas Mallon, from his book *Stolen Words: Forays into the Origins and Ravages of Plagiarism* (Ticknor & Fields, 1998). He, in turn, acknowledges borrowing it from a study written a quarter of a century earlier by the sociologist Robert Merton. As this train of attribution suggests, standing on someone else's shoulders is a process that's inseparable from the scholarly enterprise.

When I was a graduate student at the University of Rochester, I had the good fortune of studying with two exceptionally able historians, Eugene Genovese and Christopher Lasch. I am never more aware of my intellectual debt to them both than when I'm up there in front of a class in a Hamilton lecture hall casting about for the words that I hope will help my students make sense of a given historical moment or issue. It is then that I often hear echoing in my own words some of the structure, emphases, and cadences of lectures that, years before, I was privileged to hear Genovese and Lasch deliver.

Every time the term "contested terrain" pops up in a lecture of mine, I'm paying silent homage to Genovese (it is a favorite of his, although I don't think it's of his coinage); and every time I say some phenomenon or another "had resonance" with the American public, it's with a similar respectful nod to the memory of Lasch's distinctive diction.

The catchphrases, patterns, cadences, and emphases recur. And yet the voice, I believe, is genuinely mine, not theirs. For if either Genovese or Lasch were suddenly to appear in the front row during one of my lectures (a recurring nightmare of mine, Dr. Freud, if you must know), I can imagine all too well how they would shake their heads at the shallow, jumbled, and adulterated uses to which a once mildly promising former student was putting their valuable historical insights.

So I acknowledge my failings to my invisible mentors. But I have a rejoinder for them, which brings me some measure of comfort. *It's not always pretty, but it's mine.* And that is the key determination we need to make when we are trying to figure out what is and what isn't plagiarism.

If I copied a page of Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, or Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*, committed it to memory, and blandly, smoothly replayed some or all of it in my lectures, the result would be prettier, but it wouldn't be mine. I would be guilty of plagiarism. The same would be true if I presented the central theses of either book as something I had thought up all on my own. (The study of history consists, in large measure, of the study of evolving and conflicting interpretations of the past; so, if anything, I tend to overburden my students with the task of keeping track of who-first-said-what.)

Plagiarism is not impossible to avoid, nor is it a concept ruled by arbitrary or shifting definitions. If you "own your words," as my colleague in the English department, John O'Neill, used to say in the years when he served as director of the Hamilton writing center, then you should have no difficulty in avoiding plagiarism.

Establishing that ownership over the words you use, in the sense that Professor O'Neill

meant, is really at the heart of the learning process. You can read a dozen books about the cold war, but if you can't explain what you have learned to someone else in your own words, no real learning has taken place. Details about the Yalta Conference and theories about the Truman Doctrine will soon slip from memory, and you will have made no progress whatsoever toward realizing the central goal of a liberal-arts education: the ability to think for yourself.

Plagiarism substitutes someone else's prowess at explanation for your own efforts. As Julia Schult, a reference-department librarian at the college, has pointed out to me in an ongoing conversation we have had on the problem, plagiarism isn't a bad thing simply because it's an act of intellectual theft -- although it is that. It's a bad thing because it takes the place of and prevents learning.

Owning your own words is an act that consists in equal measures of understanding and creation. I *understand* what I intend to say in a speech or paper about the cold war's origins, and I *create* my own distinctive way to express this understanding. Not all the words have to be your own. Some can be enclosed in quotes and attributed to the proper sources. Others in common usage can be freely employed without quotation marks or attribution. A literary (or Pythonesque) allusion or two is also perfectly acceptable. Maybe some of an admired colleague's or favorite professor's rhetorical style will creep in, as well -- the great chain of teaching forging another link.

In the end, however, what you should be striving for, in everything you say and write, is the free expression of your own developing voice, employing the words you are coming to own. And if it isn't pretty, at least you'll be better equipped to deal with that problem in your next speech or paper.

I am not impressed by the argument that has been advanced by a few of my colleagues in recent months to the effect that, out there "in the real world," people plagiarize all the time, and no one thinks the worse of them for it. Or by the argument that the invention of the Internet somehow makes our old notions of intellectual property obsolete. As learning communities, colleges and universities are governed by a different set of rules than those governing the worlds of politics and commerce.

What we do is teach students to develop their own voices and establish ownership of the words they use. And, if and when we in higher education stop doing that, we have pretty well abandoned our justification for existence.

This has been a difficult year at Hamilton College. In time, I hope, we will come to a balanced judgment of Eugene Tobin's years here. In nine years as president, he helped to raise the college's national profile and improve its academic standing among its peer institutions, oversaw a rise in admissions selectivity, initiated reform in Hamilton's residential-life system and its core curriculum, and, of course, raised a lot of money. Recently, the college established an endowed professorship in his name. But the worst possible way we could choose to honor his many contributions would be to abandon the tough stance on plagiarism that distinguishes Hamilton as an institution of higher

learning.

Maurice Isserman is a professor of history at Hamilton College and was recently appointed the faculty coordinator for the college's writing center.

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HOT TYPE

2 Cases of Plagiarism, and an Explanation of Why the Practice Might Be Worth It

By SCOTT McLEEMEE

PLAGIARISM BY DESIGN? MIT Press is demanding compensation from **McGraw-Hill** for infringing on MIT's copyright on *Pietro Belluschi: Modern American Architect*, by **Meredith L. Clausen**, a professor of architectural history at the University of Washington. Portions of Ms. Clausen's monograph are reproduced, without acknowledgment, in *Structures of Our Time: 31 Buildings That Changed Modern Life* (McGraw-Hill, 2002), by **Roger Shepherd**, a professor of fine arts at the Parsons School of Design, in New York.

In a telephone interview, Mr. Shepherd acknowledged the plagiarism, and said that there were "a variety of reasons why some chunks of that book ended up in a book of mine from two years ago." He said the situation involved "one of the research assistants I had hired, and the pressure I was under during 9/11." Some of Ms. Clausen's book "had been put in as rough stuff, meant to be rewritten, and it remained in."

It is not the first complaint provoked by *Structures of Our Time*. About a year ago, Mr. Shepherd said, **Princeton Architectural Press** contacted his publisher about passages from one of its books that had been incorporated into Mr. Shepherd's volume. **Kevin Lippert**, the publisher of Princeton Architectural Press, confirmed that the press had complained to McGraw-Hill. But he also indicated that material from not one but three PAP titles "appeared without attribution or permission" in *Structures*.

"McGraw-Hill went so far as to recall the book," said Mr. Shepherd. "It's shredded them." **April Hattori**, McGraw-Hill's vice president for communications, confirmed that the press had received a complaint about the book in 2003, but said that the book had not been withdrawn because of the plagiarism charge. "For business reasons," she said, "it was taken out of print."

Ms. Clausen cites 19 passages from her book -- including several long paragraphs -- that are reproduced in *Structures of Our Time*. Sentences appear to have been copied intact, then altered for punctuation, or slightly reworded. Someone identified as "an all but ideal client" in Ms. Clausen's account "proved to be the ideal client" in Mr. Shepherd's telling.

"This is about as clear a case of copyright infringement as I've seen," said **William S.**

Strong, a lawyer in Boston who is representing MIT Press. "It isn't just plagiarism, though a lot of people don't get that distinction." Plagiarism includes, for example, paraphrasing a work without acknowledging the source. "Plagiarism is a moral violation," said Mr. Strong, "but it's not illegal." Taking over the actual words appearing in a copyrighted text, however, is legally actionable, and a matter to which Mr. Strong has devoted close attention over the years, as author of *The Copyright Book: A Practical Guide* (MIT Press), now in its fifth edition.

Mr. Shepherd said that he is now writing a letter to Ms. Clausen. "I'm going to tell her I have remorse for this, and that I take total responsibility. And in fact, I'm probably not going to be able to write any more books."

Mr. Shepherd started drafting his letter at just about the time **Charles J. Ogletree Jr.**, a professor of law at Harvard University, made a widely publicized apology for the six paragraphs from another scholar's work appearing, without attribution, in Mr. Ogletree's recent book *All Deliberate Speed: Reflections on the First Half-Century of Brown v. Board of Education* (**W.W. Norton**). An official report from Harvard called the borrowing "a serious scholarly transgression" -- though not necessarily a case of deliberate wrongdoing on the part of Mr. Ogletree, who told *The Harvard Crimson* that he is guilty only of editorial neglect in handling a draft prepared by a graduate student.

Clearly something must be done about those rogue graduate students.

While waiting for that to happen, scholars might want to consult an article by **Matthew C. Woessner**, an assistant professor of public policy at Pennsylvania State University at Harrisburg, appearing in the April issue of the journal *PS: Political Science & Politics*. Applying rational-choice theory, Mr. Woessner contends that "the costs imposed upon those who are caught cheating are often insufficient to outweigh the objective benefits of cheating" -- just as, in a game of blackjack, it is sometimes worth the risk of "busting" (exceeding 21) by taking another hit, if the player thinks the dealer is bluffing. The title of Mr. Woessner's paper is "Beating the House: How Inadequate Penalties for Cheating Make Plagiarism an Excellent Gamble."

While his analysis focuses on student plagiarism, Mr. Woessner writes by e-mail that the logic of his argument "applies quite readily to faculty." In short, if the profits of misconduct exceed the costs of getting caught, then you don't need an M.B.A. to see the bottom line. The challenge is to figure out how to increase the costs of getting caught in an effective way.

And that, says Mr. Woessner, requires more than the expectation that the light-fingered Professor X must pay monetary damages to the unhappy Professor Y. "There are actually two aggrieved parties," writes Mr. Woessner: "Professor Y and the institution that employs Professor X. ... If the stolen material is a substantive component of a research project, the theft might well have saved (the plagiarist) dozens, or even hundreds, of

hours of work. This is research time presumably owed to the institution." And that's not counting such benefits as tenure and promotion that may accrue to a faculty member on the basis of plagiarized work.

"When the considerable benefits of fraud are weighed against the improbability of detection," writes Mr. Woessner, "the requisite penalties for willful conduct ought to be fairly dramatic." At very least, raising the costs might make scholars more careful about hiring intellectual kleptomaniacs as research assistants.

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FIRST PERSON

Fending Off a Plagiarist

An assistant professor found herself having to prove that her dissertation was really hers

By KIM LANEGAN

A colleague on my campus calls me the "scourge of student plagiarists." I'm proud of that reputation. But I had an experience this year in which plagiarism nearly defeated me, shaking my faith in academe's core values as well as my ability to turn my students into honest scholars.

While I was resigned to fighting plagiarists in my classroom, I had not expected to have to fight one for credit for my own dissertation. A doctoral student at Northeast Urban University -- I'll call him Mr. X -- presented my dissertation as his own. He received a Ph.D. and took an excellent research job at Prominent African University. Through my subsequent efforts, he lost his degree, his job, and his reputation.

Here's what happened: Some years ago, just after I defended my dissertation, I received a call from Mr. X. He had read one of my publications, and because we were studying the same African social movement, asked whether I had written anything else on the topic. An innocent enough question. I've made similar requests myself.

Since my dissertation was not yet bound in my university's library, I put a copy of it on a disk and mailed it off to him. I put his name and address in my Rolodex and kept a lookout for his work.

Last summer I discovered that he had defended his dissertation three years after I defended mine. I requested a copy of it through interlibrary loan. As soon as the dissertation was in my hands, I flipped first to the bibliography to see which of my works he had cited. Yes, I'm vain.

"Humph. He didn't cite my dissertation," I thought. I flipped to the table of contents. "Wow, he asked the same questions I did." I read the abstract. "Damn. Those are my words."

My heart pounded. This was my dissertation!

In the acknowledgement, he thanked his beloved for her patience during the years it took him to write it. Write it? He didn't even have to type it; I sent it to him on disk.

He copied many of my chapters word for word. Other chapters were slightly altered so as to make the arguments totally fraudulent. I did research in three African towns; Mr. X said he had studied two other towns. So where I quoted statements by an activist or scholar from town A, he changed the names and said that they were speaking about town Z.

It was equivalent to taking a quotation from Garrison Keillor about life in Minnesota and saying that Woody Allen said it about New York City.

I immediately contacted the dean at Northeast Urban University, who quickly started an investigation. Even though my dissertation predated Mr. X's, the dean still asked me for copies of my interview tapes with informants and for copies of some primary sources that I had quoted. Colleagues thought I should be incensed and hoped Mr. X was being asked to produce documentation as well.

While gathering evidence to prove that my dissertation was actually mine, I confronted many dark thoughts about this profession. Mr. X must have thought that he would get away with his theft because nobody reads dissertations. Was he correct? Was all that work simply a hoop to jump through to get the Ph.D.? What is the value of a doctoral degree if dissertation committees take as little care with their students as Mr. X's did with him?

His adviser is a prominent scholar I've met at conferences. Although he is not an expert in the country or social movement covered in my dissertation, shouldn't he have known Mr. X's ideas and writing style well enough to recognize that the submitted dissertation did not sound like Mr. X's work? Shouldn't the committee have expected to see the process of Mr. X's arguments evolving or read drafts of chapters? At the very least, shouldn't the committee have told Mr. X to update my literature review and rework some of my convoluted logic and awkward prose?

Is cheating so pervasive that even someone who seeks a career in academe will violate the fundamental principle of giving other scholars credit for their work? If so, what hope do I have of inculcating that principle in students eager to escape quickly with their B.A. in hand?

People have asked whether I felt like an idiot for having sent Mr. X my dissertation. Did I want to sue him? Would I share my work in the future?

There certainly were moments when I was furious. Reading Mr. X take credit for conducting, transcribing, and analyzing my 109 interviews did bring tears to my eyes. Once a student asked me, "So how long did it take you to write the dissertation?" Standing before the class, I realized that Mr. X had essentially taken credit for years of my full-time work.

However I have not given up on the profession. Even though I have new evidence of plagiarism's power -- how people will take great risks to cheat and others will avoid the hard work of keeping them from cheating -- I am renewed in my campaign against it.

Certainly, I have learned that researchers must hold on to their primary sources. I've written this article in part as a cautionary tale to fellow scholars. Send copies of your primary sources to archives if you desire, but keep the originals yourself.

Because I had overwhelming evidence that my accusations against Mr. X were true, Northeast Urban University was convinced that it had to take the ultimate step of rescinding his Ph.D. Yet the university consistently signaled to me its desire to maintain confidentiality, which I interpret as evidence that it feared being sued by Mr. X. In fact, the university appeared far more afraid of Mr. X than of me, which I found quite frustrating.

The experience has not changed my willingness to share my unpublished work with other scholars or to post my conference papers on Web pages and hope that readers will heed my "not for purposes of quotation" statement -- and not copy my work either.

The bottom line is that we write to be read. Hopefully we inform others who build upon our work. So we have a great responsibility to share our work; that is our *raison d'être*.

But we have another, equally great responsibility to police ourselves, our students, and other scholars to maintain the trust and honesty upon which sharing work and knowledge depends.

I don't believe Mr. X planned on presenting my dissertation as his own when he first received it from me. But for some reason he became sufficiently desperate to commit a tragic and foolish fraud. And I do regard this as a tragedy rather than a personal victory. I heard from another faculty member at Prominent African University that Mr. X had been admired by his colleagues and was a role model for young scholars, all of whom subsequently came to feel betrayed by him. He called Mr. X's ouster "a nightmare" for all concerned.

I shared this experience with my students; they found it fascinating. But they still don't get it. We have a tradition on my campus where seniors "will" wishful gifts to faculty members. This past spring the seniors said they hoped that I could someday "bitch-slap the ass who stole my dissertation." They also wished that I would have "the ability to not check every single source a student uses in a research paper."

Note that they did not will me the ability to not *have to* check every source. Instead they think it's unreasonable of me to take such care to ensure that they are not plagiarizing. I fear they think that is some vile pleasure of mine.

Clearly they think it was outrageous that Mr. X plagiarized my work. But they do not yet

see that Mr. X got away with what he did precisely because he did not have a professor who checked all of his sources. They do not yet see that I check their sources so that I can teach them a skill and a principle that could keep them from someday losing a degree, a job, or a reputation.

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