

# Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge

---

Volume 9

Issue 3 *Teaching Transformations 2011: Contributions from the May 2011 Joint Annual Conference of the Center for Innovative Teaching (CIT) and Educational Technology (EdTech) at UMass Boston*

Article 3

---

1-1-2011

## Addressing Plagiarism in A Digital Age

Eleanor Kutz

University of Massachusetts Boston, Eleanor.Kutz@umb.edu

Wayne Rhodes

University of Massachusetts Boston, wayne.rhodes@umb.edu

Stephen Sutherland

University of Massachusetts Boston, stephen.sutherland@umb.edu

Vivian Zamel

University of Massachusetts Boston, vivian.zamel@umb.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Educational Sociology Commons](#), and the [Science and Technology Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kutz, Eleanor; Rhodes, Wayne; Sutherland, Stephen; and Zamel, Vivian (2011) "Addressing Plagiarism in A Digital Age," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*: Vol. 9: Iss. 3, Article 3.  
Available at: <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol9/iss3/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. It has been accepted for inclusion in Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at UMass Boston. For more information, please contact [library.uasc@umb.edu](mailto:library.uasc@umb.edu).



## *Addressing Plagiarism in A Digital Age*

**Eleanor Kutz, Wayne Rhodes, Stephen Sutherland, and Vivian Zamel**

*University of Massachusetts Boston*

---

eleanor.kutz@umb.edu • wayne.rhodes@umb.edu • stephen.sutherland@umb.edu • vivian.zamel@umb.edu

**Abstract:** Four faculty members from UMass Boston's English Department explore possible ways of addressing the issue of plagiarism with their students as easy access to materials on the Internet is making it easier than ever to draw on others' words, with or without appropriate documentation. Approaching faculty concerns from four complementary perspectives, the authors make the case for 1) recasting our understanding of plagiarism in terms of influence, borrowing, and remixing of the sort that is central to musical and artistic creation, 2) examining how students might develop greater awareness of the ways in which they are working with sources in their writing and why, 3) proactively using specific teaching strategies to guide students in working with Internet materials, and 4) understanding the capabilities and limitations of anti-plagiarism software and finding ways to use such tools constructively and creatively to contribute to students' learning.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Why do students plagiarize? Are there "honest" reasons for such violations? There are many answers: some cultural (as when students' home cultures value the public, expected language over individual voices); some personal (as when students themselves fear that their own words and thoughts are inadequate); some based in a lack of knowledge (about how to para-

phrase or cite appropriately); and some based in confusion about documenting collaborative activity. But also some because (as we often fear) an individual student has made a conscious decision to present the words and work of others as his or her own, to get through an assignment without doing the work it requires. With the Internet making vast amounts of material available online to cut and paste, the problem has new dimensions, not only because it's easy (and writing is hard), but

---

**Eleanor Kutz** is a Professor Emerita of English at UMass Boston, currently serving as the faculty liaison for Information Technology at the university and focusing on faculty development and teaching with technology. Her research areas are discourse and literacy and her most recent book is *Exploring Literacy* (Longman 2004). **Wayne Rhodes** teaches Freshman English and ESL at UMass Boston, has published short fiction, and has performed works by noted "plagiarists" Muddy Waters, Son House, Robert Johnson, and Bob Dylan on numerous occasions. **Stephen Sutherland** is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Boston, where he serves as Associate Director of Freshman English. His recent work on immigration in pedagogy and literacy narratives appears in *The WAC Journal*. His current research, which is forthcoming in *Reader and in JAC*, examines metaphor in/as pedagogy; the role of citation in forming academic fields; and pedagogies for image-text relationships. **Vivian Zamel** is Professor of English and Director of the ESL Program and the Center for Innovative Teaching (CIT) at UMass Boston. Her teaching areas include English as a Second Language and Composition Theory & Practice. Zamel's publications include *Enriching ESOL Pedagogy*, *Negotiating Academic Literacies*, *Crossing the Curriculum*, and *Language Lessons: Stories for Teaching and Learning English*, all co-edited with Ruth Spack.

because website material typically doesn't offer a clear sense of authorship—the material there seems to be free-floating with links to other sites that seem equally unauthored and all part of a public domain, and, some would argue, because borrowing, appropriating, and remixing (sampling) are part of a new set of cultural norms for creativity.

Plagiarism has most often been approached as a matter of academic dishonesty. The UMass Boston code of academic conduct, for example, doesn't actually use the word plagiarism but refers instead to “academic honesty” and “dishonesty.” Honesty violations include the following: 1. Submitting as one's own an author's published or unpublished work (e.g., material from a journal, Internet site, newspaper, or encyclopedia), in whole, in part, or in paraphrase, without fully and properly crediting the author; 2. Submitting as one's own work or materials obtained from another student, individual, or agency without full and proper attribution; 3. Submitting as one's own work material that has been produced through unacknowledged or unauthorized collaboration with others” (Code).

Yet recent studies suggest that students don't recognize such copying, when it comes from the Internet, to constitute such an honesty violation. One large survey of university students over a five-year period showed that: “the number who believed that copying from the Web constitutes “serious cheating” is declining—to 29 percent on average in recent surveys from 34 percent earlier in the decade” (Gabriel). The results of other surveys suggest that the decision to use unattributed material from the Internet reflects not only “a poor understanding of academic integrity” but also “the perception that the probabilities of detection and severe punishment are low” (Dee and Jacob).

Students may not see their Internet borrowings as representing academic

dishonesty, but their teachers do. There is an increasing demand from faculty for software that allows better detection of instances of plagiarism, either to catch the culprits (in the case of intentional cheating) or to make students more aware of the issue and the extent to which their borrowings might be inappropriate—and new software tools such as Turnitin and SafeAssign (the latter available within Blackboard at UMass Boston) are perceived as a way of fighting fire with fire. Yet, catching potential offenders is a very narrow and limited response to a much more complex pedagogical issue.

In our own teaching at UMass Boston, we have tried to come to a fuller understanding of what motivates the moments when our students draw too heavily on the unacknowledged words of others. We want to help our students to negotiate the complex process of placing their own writing in dialogue with the texts of others who have addressed a topic while finding the locus of their own authority. We want to give our students effective strategies for resisting the lure of the Internet and the easy cutting and pasting of words it allows. We want our students to understand the ways that their professors across the curriculum are likely to see any unacknowledged borrowings and to have some familiarity with the increasingly popular anti-plagiarism software that will be used in many of their courses. But at the same time, we'd like to suggest that the very fluidity of sources and resources being shared in the contemporary world may require that we, as faculty, move beyond overly simplified views of what constitutes plagiarism and how to address it with our students.

In what follows we will each present an aspect of these issues in different voices and styles. Wayne Rhodes begins by recasting our broad understanding of plagiarism in terms of influence, borrowing, and remixing in musical and artistic creation. In his characteristic voice as a musician and

writer, Rhodes uses/adapts the metaphors of RO (read only) vs. RW (read and write) to argue for classrooms in which students can invest and take risks. Vivian Zamel then narrows the focus by examining how students might develop greater awareness of how they use and ought to use sources in their writing. Working from a linguistic perspective, Zamel studies the work of a particular student in her class in relation to an excerpt from Mike Rose's influential book *Lives on the Boundary*. Speaking directly to teachers in pragmatic terms, Stephen Sutherland then shifts the focus to a set of nine proactive teaching strategies that make plagiarism undesirable. He contextualizes these within both the broader cultural context that Rhodes has made manifest and the more specific sets of student assumptions that Zamel has explored. Eleanor Kutz continues to explore aspects of what Rhodes introduced as the "RW classroom" by moving the conversation to current debates about anti-plagiarism software. Describing what she has learned from the application of the software to her own students' work, she uncovers the promise and perils of this software, arguing that it might be useful as a learning tool for students and teachers if used constructively and creatively. We see these four approaches to addressing plagiarism as complementary. Working with creative borrowing can offer a route to teaching students about careful documentation and effective practices in Internet research, while the creative use of a tool like SafeAssign could help students to reflect on their own practices or to discover whether they've finally documented their inventive borrowings appropriately. Moreover, our own dialogue is helping us to enrich our own practices around a vexing teaching concern in ways that we hope will be true for our readers as well.

### **I. WAYNE RHODES: LOVE AND THEFT: BORROWING TO SOUND MORE LIKE YOURSELF**

In an article about Bob Dylan and plagiarism, Jonathan Lethem quotes from an interview where Alan Lomax asks Muddy Waters how he wrote the song "Country Blues." Waters says he "made it up," that the song "fell into" his mind, that previously there had been "some blues played like that," that the song "came from the cotton field," that Robert Johnson had "put the record out," and that he'd "learned" how to play it from Son House. Because of my experience inside the music community, such talk doesn't surprise me. Yet in my other life teaching Freshman English, it makes me wonder. What if my students talked like that? *It came from the Internet. I saw some papers written like that. Someone put it out in a magazine once. My mother helped me write it.*

Though Waters claims authorship, his language acknowledges that the song didn't come out of nowhere. It already existed in multiple contexts and forms. You might ask, "How could he write a song that already exists?" Jazz critic Kevin Whitehead, speaking of saxophonist Lucky Thompson's tendency to copy the styles of other greats, explains it this way:

Thompson used all that inspiration to sound more like himself, to expand the expressive qualities he had already. I think that's why saxophonists love him. He shows how to fold influences into a well-rounded style of your own.

Lethem attributes similar qualities to Bob Dylan, someone who is often accused of plagiarism. Early on, Dylan copied his hero Woody Guthrie so closely that he became Guthrie's spitting image (the *cheat-house.com* version). Eventually, though,

Dylan became an expert at influence folding, an origami master. Lethem calls Dylan's appropriations an example of "the ecstasy of influence," pointing out that though Dylan has copied much over his long career, still, "Dylan's originality and his appropriations are one." A good example of this is the way Dylan took the traditional song "No More Auction Block" and turned it into "Blowin' in the Wind."

The blues tradition or "folk method" Waters describes is what drives creativity and innovation in popular music. Go to YouTube and listen to the Chiffons singing "He's so Fine," and then go to George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord." Listen to "Who's Been Talkin'," by Howlin' Wolf, and then to Carlos Santana playing "Black Magic Woman." For something more recent, listen to Articolo 31's "Come una Pietra Scalciata" which builds a new song around Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone," or to *The Grey Album*, by Danger Mouse, which takes the Beatles' *The White Album* and remixes it with vocals from Jay-Z's *The Black Album*.

Clearly, the later songs are copies of the earlier ones. In another sense, however, each song is distinct, a new creation built upon what came before. Depending upon the artist's skills, the "copy" may be as indispensable as, or even more significant than, the "original." And just as the old song made the new one possible, the new one provides fertile ground for what will follow.

"But all that copying is just musicians," you might say. "It doesn't apply to writing essays in school." If you look around, though, you'll see similar methods used in other fields. Robert Polito compares Bob Dylan's musical borrowings to Picasso's "modernist collages," where he took artifacts he didn't "create" and mixed them together to make something new. Lawrence Lessig writes about Andy Warhol taking preexisting designs (like soup cans) and presenting them in ways that Lessig

describes as "distinctly Warhol." Fashion designer Johanna Blakley claims that her industry's "culture of copying" is a sign of its health because it forces designers to "up [their] game" and spurs them to invent "signature styles."

"Okay, but that's the arts," you might say. "Bad example." Well, keep looking. Examples of the "folk method" show up in science, medicine, and law as well. Legal scholar Lawrence Lessig argues that too much restriction on copying and "re-use" suppresses innovation and new ideas. For an example of how essential "second use" can be, Jonathan Lethem cites library and information science researcher Don Swanson who, through what he calls "text-mining," made an important discovery about Raynaud's Syndrome. Here's how Swanson describes it:

... I was struck by lightning and have never recovered. I encountered, partly by accident, two pieces of information from two different articles in the medical literature that together suggested an answer to a question for which I could find no single article that provided an answer. It seemed I might have found out something that no one else knew and that the medical literature might be full of such undiscovered connections.

Using old material, Swanson came up with insights that a new study might never uncover. Lessig's "second use" principle could also be applied to Matt Friedman's "discovery" of a "missing link" in the fossil record. Friedman didn't set off for exotic locales to dig up the fossils as you might suspect. Instead, he "unearthed" his evidence while digging through dusty museum basements and forgotten file drawers to sort through previous researchers' mislabeled, misfiled, and neglected work.

In law, says Lessig, the spirit of Muddy Waters and the methods of Don Swanson are in full swing:

A great brief seems to say nothing on its own. Everything is drawn from cases that went before, presented as if the argument now presented is in fact nothing new. Here again, the words of others are used to make a point the others didn't directly make. The old cases are re-mixed. The remix is meant to do something new. (52)

To make a point the others didn't directly make. This is the lawyer version of the cotton field. This is what makes Muddy Waters distinct from Robert Johnson or Son House, Bob Dylan distinct from Woody Guthrie, and Lucky Thompson more than some dude who lifts riffs from Stan Getz and John Coltrane. Lessig, the creator of Creative Commons, argues that all disciplines need the same type of open source "commons" those musicians used—not just so we can produce new songs, but so we can produce new knowledge.

As essential as it may be, copying makes people jumpy. The academic community and popular press reaction to cases of student plagiarism mirrors the press reaction to Bob Dylan's borrowings. After Dylan called attention to his own "thefts" with his 2001 album, *Love and Theft* (quotation marks, Dylan), a flurry of articles followed, most expressing dismay and outrage. In recent works, Dylan has "plagiarized" from *Huck Finn*, *The Great Gatsby*, Muddy Waters, Confederate poet Henry Timrod, Japanese novelist Junichi Saga, Ovid, and Virgil, among many others, and the list is still growing.

Some writers, though, take a different view and use Dylan's "thefts" to examine the role of influence and appropriation in the world of ideas. Polito uses "modernist collage" and "sampling" to describe what

Dylan is doing. Richard Thomas examines the importance of "intertexts" in Dylan's art and seeks to distinguish plagiarism from "creative reuse." Jonathan Lethem's "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism," plagiarizes numerous sources in order to demonstrate as well as explain Dylan's composing methods.

Jason Johnson, a former educator turned information technology consultant, also seeks to distinguish between plagiarism and creative use, not for music, but for education. In his Washington Post article, he resists the typical laments: Kids these days! Darn that Internet! and What's this world coming to? Instead, he examines the policing/detection model teachers use and wonders "if that's really what teachers should be doing." Focusing on detection diverts attention from more essential concerns. One of the article's commentators, "jdresner," elaborates on what teachers can do to mitigate the problem through revamping "assignment design," through working in "stages" "rather than simply having one big due date," and through "juxtaposing works [not] usually connected." As Johanna Blakley might say, teachers need to make like fashion designers. They need to up their game.

One way to do that, says Lessig, is to use a different "architecture." Citing the computer software terms RO (read only) vs. RW (read and write) to make his point, Lessig examines the transition from the RO/analog age of record players, where listeners could only listen, to the RW/digital age of CDs and MP3s, where listeners hold the power to be music makers, too. Educators have relied for too long, he believes, on RO-style models in the classroom:

When students come to law school, most come from an essentially RO education. For four years (or more), they've sat in large lecture halls, with a professor at the front

essentially reading the same lectures she's given year after year after year. 'Any questions?' usually elicits points of order, not substance. 'Do we have to read chapter 5?' 'Will the subjunctive be on the exam?' (85-86)

Law school, however, is a RW environment, where a class session takes the form of an "argument." The "structure demands that [students] create as they participate in the instruction" (86). Lessig's call for law school-type RW architectures allows room for writing instruction and writing assignments to follow models similar to those of the fashion designers and the blues singers. Just as he argues for fewer copyright restrictions in music in order to encourage more innovation and less policing (the very thing Blakley claims helps her field thrive), he calls for similar changes in the classroom.

Under traditional architectures in the classroom, accompanied now by a strong detection ethic, students experience mostly the anxiety of influence and rarely the ecstasy that fuels someone like Waters or Dylan or Blakley or Lethem. Dylan raises the "Love and Theft" question to make a statement about the indispensable role of influence in the creative process. In the RO/"cult of originality" world where most education systems live, however, that message can't get through. The opportunity for theft still exists, but love, that's not even on the syllabus. Ecstasy? Better look elsewhere.

Essentially, Waters' and Dylan's methods resemble what English teachers call "patch writing," where passages are copied, altered, and mixed in various ways. Though seen as plagiarism when undocumented, as Johnson noted, the "skills" involved deserve attention. Glynda Hull and Mike Rose, after "wrestling" with their concerns over this issue with a particular student, say,

it struck us that something profoundly literate is going on here. A fundamental social and psychological reality about discourse—oral or written—is human beings continually appropriate each other's language to establish group membership, to grow, and to define themselves in new ways. . . .

"A powerful pedagogic next move," they suggest, "would be temporarily to suspend concern about error and pursue, full tilt, her impulse to don the written language of another" (151). Of patchwriting, Rebecca Moore Howard says,

Often it is a form of writing that learners employ when they are unfamiliar with the words and ideas about which they are writing. In this situation, patchwriting can actually help the learner begin to understand the unfamiliar material. Yet it is a transitional writing form; it is never acceptable for final-draft academic writing, for it demonstrates that the writer does not fully understand the source from which he or she is patchwriting. Because patchwriting can result from a student's inexperience with conventions of academic writing, instruction in quotation and source attribution and a request for subsequent revision of the paper may be an appropriate response for the instructor. But because patchwriting often results from a student's unfamiliarity with the words and ideas of a source text, instruction in the material discussed in the source and a request for subsequent revision of the paper is even more frequently the appropriate response. (799)

Based on the sources cited here, a RW classroom might include parameters such as these on the syllabus:

- Sharing and collaboration
- Asking new questions
- Working in stages
- Introducing unexpected (even spontaneous) sources from a variety of fields (and provided by students as well as teachers)
- Connecting disparate elements (such as using the metaphor of a record player as an analogy for education)
- Promoting “second use” through imitation with modification
- “Assembling other people’s ideas” to discover new insights and perhaps happen upon “undiscovered public knowledge”
- Viewing mistakes as potential opportunities

This kind of design frees student writers from the anxiety of influence (and their teachers from the anxiety of enforcement) and creates the conditions for experiencing the ecstasy of influence instead. Like Waters, students can learn what it’s like to write a song that already exists and somehow make it new. Like Thompson, they can learn how to copy in order to sound more like themselves and also, in Lessig’s words, “to make a point the others didn’t directly make.”

As a teacher, I don’t want to play meter maid or traffic cop. I want my classroom to copy the fashion designers, lawyers, and musicians. I want to tell my students to go ahead—be Woody, sing his songs, stand in his boots, adopt his accent and his biography, smoke his brand of cigarettes, pose like he does in photos. That’s not theft—that’s love. It’s language acquisition. It’s “adapting and embracing filiations, communities, and discourses,” says Lethem (using a phrase “lifted” from George L. Dillon). Teachers need to realize that some of the thefts they see are not thefts, but what Susan McCarthy calls “an

early stage of a journey toward grace, competence, and comprehension” (x). In a collaborative environment, a student can learn, in music critic Paul Williams’ words, “to reach beyond his or her present abilities, beyond what he’s sure he can do and into the unknown” (85). The classroom becomes New York’s Café Wha?, circa 1961, or the Mississippi Delta in the 1920s and 30s—a collaborative, teeming reef of ideas and creativity.

Later, when student writers have nearly finished their project, before the official release or publication or evaluation, they can see their work as being just like Muddy Waters’ blues. Now they can take their Alan Lomax readers on a tour of the cotton field where it all came from, the place where they heard it, learned it, made it. Documentation now takes on new meaning and significance. Let me show you how I did this thing I’m so proud of. See? Here’s how you can do similar things yourself. Here, student writers become teachers, translating for those poor, uninitiated folks who’ve never visited Gerde’s Folk City, The Gaslight Cafe, or 1920s New Orleans. Classmates are collaborators even at these final stages, making up a kind of open source community help desk where they share influences and offer advice to each other on how to use their sources more effectively and make them more open and accessible to all. Students become invested in the work, not just the grade, and when you are invested in the work, the work gets better.

Assignments are no longer a pressure-packed one-shot deal. The incentives to cheat evaporate. Why sweat it? We’re going to write this again. We’re going to find new things to add, things we haven’t discovered yet. And we don’t have to do it alone. We’ll have lots of help. After we work like that for a while, our admittedly derivative work will evolve into its remixed or hybrid form, something that from there just might turn into some as yet unforeseen brand new

thing, where our originality and our appropriations finally become one. “No More Auction Block” recedes, and “Blowin’ in the Wind” is born.

In such a setting, English compositions, term papers, and research projects have an opportunity to become more than just requirement-fulfilling, forgettable, who-gives-a-damn exercises, the kind that create little more than the ideal conditions for dishonesty. In an ecstasy of influence environment, students, much like Swanson, stand at least a fighting chance of getting struck by lightning.

## II. VIVIAN ZAMEL: STUDENT WRITERS’ PERSPECTIVES

I have come to see in my teaching of composition courses and through my work as Director of the Center for the Improvement of Teaching (now, the Center for Innovative Teaching) at UMass Boston that students may often not be aware of the inappropriate ways they use resources when writing a paper. I remind faculty in my workshops that when students use sources without attributing them, they may not understand that this strategy is problematic. For some students, the very practices of overusing or not attributing sources may have been viewed by previous teachers as not only acceptable but successful, and so these students continue to draw on sources in the same way. While it is often assumed by professors that such strategies are used by students who have gone to schools in countries where a heavy reliance on sources in writing papers is expected, this tendency can be seen as well in the writing of students who have graduated from U.S. high schools, where students fulfill their writing assignments by using encyclopedic entries or pasting together texts they find online. Or, students who are struggling with their assigned academic work may not know how to respond to this

work, faced with the unfamiliarity of issues or complexity of texts they are assigned to read and the discipline-specific language in which issues are discussed. Students may even feel pressed to use sources inappropriately because their incomplete understanding and their limited linguistic resources can result in papers that professors indicate are “unacceptable.” Faced with this kind of teacher response, and feeling unable to fulfill the assignment, students may resort to using sources that they believe will meet their professors’ expectations, reasoning that the writers of these texts are “experts” who clearly understand the issues about which they are writing and discuss these issues in impressive and sophisticated language. Doing so, of course, leads to papers that are deemed as “unacceptable” for different reasons, thus creating what some students see as a double bind: they can’t use their own words but they can’t use someone else’s either.

It is critical to understand why students may use sources the way they do because such an understanding helps teachers understand students’ strategies and keeps teachers from drawing quick conclusions about students’ intentions. Linguists know that determining the underlying cause for language error can be the very key to helping learners acquire the target language. This notion of exploring the reasons and assumptions underlying learners’ performance can be applied to any error learners make, including the erroneous use of sources. An understanding of why students adopt certain (erroneous) strategies gives teachers insight into how to better address this issue in their teaching. Rather than assuming that students already understand the “rules” regarding the appropriate use of sources, teachers need to help students become more aware of the practices and strategies they use as well as those they ought to be using in their writing.

One specific way that I try to raise this kind of awareness in my own teaching involves asking students to read and respond to a section from Mike Rose's book, *Lives on the Boundary*. In this section of the book Rose recounts working with Marita, a student who had been sent to meet with him because she had had been accused of plagiarism, having written a paper that "was clearly not all hers" (180). As he talks with Marita, he discovers the underlying causes for her error. He comes to learn that Marita could not see how she could possibly contribute to the complex issue she was asked to write about—the relationship between science and creativity—given her limited understanding of this issue. Rose comes to see that her own sense of discomfort may have been compounded by the fact that Marita had been taught by her father to limit expressing her opinion, and she thus came to be "cautious and reticent" (180). Marita, wanting to do well on the assignment, but sensing her own limitations with respect to the paper she was assigned to write, draws on an encyclopedic entry about creativity and the sciences, but makes sure to cite her source. She is thus astonished to learn that she had done something wrong, explaining to Rose that she had been given to understand that she was expected to use other texts, so long as she indicated what her sources were.

When Rose reads Marita's paper, it becomes clear to him that "she had incorporated stretches of old encyclopedic prose into her paper and had quoted only some of it" (180). But he also recognizes why this may have happened. In addition to noting how her own reticence contributed to the text she wrote, he acknowledges her motivation to do well: "I imagined that it had pleased her previous teachers that she cared enough about her work to go find sources, to rely on experts...[H]er conscientiousness and diligence, her commitment to the academic way, must have been a great

joy to those who taught her" (180). In reflecting on Marita's situation, Rose comes to understand the challenges she faced in a far more complicated way:

Marita was adrift in a set of conventions she didn't fully understand; she offended without knowing why. Virtually all the writing academics do is built on the writing of others. Every argument proceeds from the texts of others. Marita was only partially initiated to how this works: She was still unsure as to how to weave quotations in with her own prose, how to mark the difference, how to cite whom she used, how to strike the proper balance between her writing and someone else's—how, in short, to position herself in an academic discussion. (180)

When I asked first year students in my composition courses to read about Marita's situation, in order to both explore their perspectives on this issue and use these perspectives as a source for instruction, I gained further insights into why students might borrow from sources the way they do. For example, Kwan, a student in one of my courses, wrote,

*Marita is, like myself, "unsure as to how to weave quotations in with her own prose, how to mark the difference, how to cite whom she used, how to strike the proper balance between her writing and someone else's—how, in short, to position herself in an academic conversation" (p. 180). I believe she didn't intend the plagiarism, she was just unsure of how, when, and what to quote. Personally I really believe that writing skill gets better as building on the writing of others. Another reason I love to quote or borrow from others is because they use the perfect, or at least,*

*grammatically perfect English, which I have to achieve someday. I quote to learn, I borrow to get a sense, so that I can make them mine. I believe that it will eventually make my sentence richer; my writing better if I turn those good ideas into my own. Since I was corrected so many times by my English professor, now I am getting a better idea of when, how, and what to quote. Students just need right guidance.*

I find Kwan's response illuminating. It reveals why Kwan understands and identifies with Marita's situation, recognizing that she "didn't intend the plagiarism, she was just unsure of how, when, and what to quote." Kwan acknowledges his own reasons for using the language of the texts that he reads. He has found this approach to be an instructive strategy, believing that "writing skill gets better as building on the writing of others," helping him "to achieve" and acquire language and the academic discourse of the work assigned to him. He sees how quoting and borrowing from sources can be beneficial to him: "I quote to learn, I borrow to get a sense, so that I can make them mine... to make my sentence richer, my writing better...." But he recognizes that this strategy must be used deliberately and judiciously and that with opportunities to practice this strategy and the "right guidance," which both Marita and he needed, he has come to have a better understanding of how to enter the academic conversation appropriately. This is borne out in his very response, a response that illustrates that he genuinely understands what academics do as they write, quoting from and weaving Rose's words into his own writing.

### III. STEPHEN SUTHERLAND: STRATEGIES FOR MAKING PLAGIARISM UNDESIRABLE

Given what my colleague Vivian Zamel has argued in the previous section about the assumptions that our students might be making when they use the words and ideas of others, and given the complex contemporary contexts within which we and our students need to understand what plagiarism is (see Halasek), how might instructors address plagiarism?

In response to this question, I would like to offer nine practical suggestions that address plagiarism by supporting good pedagogy for reading, writing and research methods. These strategies proactively help us "reimagine the classroom as a context in which cheating is not just ethically but strategically undesirable" (Zwagerman 686) by focusing on teaching, not catching. In many ways, these strategies help discourage plagiarism by teaching students to see the rewards of their own engagement with sources, even when that engagement involves error and bafflement. What underlies these strategies is a notion that writing with source materials is a *process* that requires both time and explicit instruction in reading and writing—not simply a product to be assessed. The overarching challenge is for us to see—and to enable our students to see—reading and writing as complex, interrelated acts that are rewarding for their own sake, not just means to an end. That is to say, the strategies I offer are designed to fend off the idea that working with sources is simply a path to acceptable student writing or that what we value is only the written product at the end of that path. Instead, we need to value as the end result what students learn as they walk that path; or, as Sean Zwagerman puts it, we need to start "engaging the process rather than punishing the product" (702).

### *1. Customize your assignments and the combinations of sources you require students to use*

Arguably the easiest form of plagiarism is the wholesale stealing (from the Internet or from print sources) of a pre-written paper on a popular topic such as gun control or marriage equality. Generic assignment topics, especially those that allow students to use any sources they might find, make it more likely that students might plagiarize. A more customized assignment prompt, especially one that requires students to use less predictable sources (or to set unusual combinations of sources into dialogue with each other) not only discourages plagiarism but also encourages students to work in more nuanced ways with sources. If the assignment simply asks students to cover territory (e.g., arguments on both sides of a broad, generic gun-control debate) and to stake out a position, then the assignment has likely failed to teach students why it is rewarding to work with sources in the first place. Such assignments simply see sources as information or as grist for making arguments. But advanced literacy involves so much more than that: As teachers we want our students to learn how to see one idea in relation to others, or in a critical or historical context; we want them to learn the rewards of testing out one scholar's set of terms or ideas as they investigate the ideas of another scholar. These customized assignments require that students think about how to use a set of sources, not simply cover the content of sources; they thereby enable students to see themselves as thinkers who have a genuine opportunity to say something of their own, something new or surprising—not something that can be bought or stolen from the collective stock of papers available on the Internet. Most of all, a customized assignment that requires students to use an origi-

nal or unusual set of sources requires time, and paying attention to time can help us slow down the fast pace of technology.

### *2. Don't assign too much reading or ask students to read too quickly*

One of the most common reasons for plagiarism is lack of time. Some students who feel pressed to read a great deal of material in a short period (particularly when that material is new or difficult) might be tempted to plagiarize; this is especially true now that we can so quickly cut and paste from electronic sources. If we shift our emphasis from reading for the sake of coverage to reading for the sake of writing, we can limit the amount of reading we ask students to do. In doing so, we can also allow enough time for students to work with complex sources. The goals and context of each course can help us understand what counts as "too much reading" or what "reading too quickly" might mean in a particular class. In courses that place a premium on coverage, some of the material might be covered by lectures and by handouts, rather than asking students to read it all. This might mean asking students to read only the customized set of sources we want them to work with very carefully when they write. Of course, we are of necessity sacrificing one thing whenever we decide to teach another, but there are rewards to asking students to read less than we might at first have wanted them to read: Using fewer sources allows us to teach students how to slow down and read closely in order to examine a writer's assumptions, key terms, characteristic methods, level of persuasiveness, and a host of other matters that are crucial when students sit down to write a paper that uses sources. Working with fewer sources also offers us opportunities in class discussions or lectures to use examples that will be more familiar to more students. And teaching students how to *work with fewer*

sources, rather than simply *read* more, gives us more chances to offer some explicit instruction in reading and note taking.

### *3. Teach note-taking and drafting strategies that help students avoid plagiarism*

Sometimes plagiarism occurs when writers have taken notes on their sources and (a) have forgotten to place direct quotations in quotation marks with page references, (b) have not been careful to note that they are paraphrasing a passage from a source, or (c) have not distinguished between the ideas in a source and their own ideas in response to that source. Although we as teachers and academics have internalized these aspects of note taking, our students are often still learning and practicing how to do this, and it is all the more difficult with faster technologies that allow one to paste source material into one's own draft. If a teacher has chosen a limited number of customized sources, s/he can then set aside some time to provide explicit instruction in how to take notes on those sources. Kathryn Valentine argues that "avoiding plagiarism is done not through rule following but through repeatedly carrying out what counts as citation in a context similar to the context in which citation will be required" (93). To teach students this kind of practice in how to cite, teachers might, for instance, design a hand-out that demonstrates how to take notes (and how not to take notes) on a source that all students have had the time to read. A double-entry system allows a reader to quote, paraphrase and summarize in a left-hand column and to comment, respond and assess in a right-hand column—thereby keeping material taken from the source separate from the reader's ideas. Teaching note-taking strategies also means teaching the differences between quoting from a source, paraphrasing part of a source, and summarizing a source. These

are useful and important moves for writers to be able to make once they start writing (see Burg, et al. for more suggestions). An in-class exercise that asks students to identify some key terms or short passages they consider quote-worthy can then lead to instruction in how to quote those passages and how to paraphrase them (and how to decide when to quote, rather than paraphrase). After undertaking such an exercise, students are already on the path to writing a draft that uses quotations they care about, rather than feeling they simply need source materials as filler.

### *4. Require that your students hand in reading notes, annotated bibliographies, and drafts*

This strategy formalizes and extends the previous strategy by making reading part of the work of the course. It is easier and more tempting for students to plagiarize when reading happens only outside of class, as though it were simply a given. When we bring the act of reading into our classes, we acknowledge its importance, its complexity, and its rewards. One way to do this is to break writing assignments down into stages that students have to submit—not necessarily for assessment purposes (although that might be part of it), but as learning opportunities. For instance, students might submit reading notes that take the form of some questions about a source, a difficulty or hitch the reader has encountered, or the double-entry notes I described earlier. If an instructor can use some of these reading notes to shape a lecture or to initiate class discussion, then the reading notes will be even more powerful. For instance, groups of students might work with a difficulty that was presented by a student in his/her reading notes. Being required to submit an annotated bibliography not only sets students on the path to a research paper, but also requires them to have some sense of what their

sources are about and how they might end up using them. Sharing their sources with peers (through a short presentation or a handout) helps give students a sense of ownership, a sense that their source materials are now in their custody and that they need to work carefully and responsibly with them. This helps undermine the likelihood of students plagiarizing when they feel they quickly need to find sources to which they have had no time to develop any attachment. Internet sources can feel especially anonymous and unattached because they get moved quickly by reader-writers; it is therefore all the more necessary to teach students to sit with their sources in slow and deliberate ways.

##### *5. Work in class with short passages from sources to demonstrate the rewards of doing so*

This strategy reinforces my previous point about making reading part of the class work, rather than an adjunct activity that merely precedes or follows it. Students might plagiarize because they see source use as something rote or simply as an arbitrary requirement. They might plagiarize because they do not feel comfortable that their understanding of a source is valid or that their ability to read complex sources is adequate. An instructor can undermine these reasons for plagiarizing by demonstrating in class how rewarding it is to engage with a rich passage from a source. For instance, a class discussion of a complex source passage might reassure students that their struggles with a reading are not deficiencies, but part of the difficulty with which many readers need to grapple. This exercise might be prompted by a difficulty that a student raises in her/his reading notes, and it might provide the class with a chance to develop some strategies for how to work through difficulty. Working with a

passage in class can also help students see how different readers will choose different ideas to foreground or have differing responses to a source. This work helps disrupt the disabling idea that there needs to be a standard response, and it helps minimize a student's worry that he/she may have foregrounded the "wrong" aspects of a source.

##### *6. Create a culture of genuine interest in how your students represent and use sources*

This strategy follows directly from the work in class with a passage from a source. Students will be less tempted to plagiarize if they know that their instructor is genuinely interested not just in whether or not they have "done the reading," and not just in whether or not they have cited accurately, but in *how* they have read their sources. Doing so requires shifting the idea of a "reading" away from a static source text and toward a particular student reader's kinetic take on that source (for more on this, see Sutherland). The reading thus becomes not just an argument about, say, gun control that a student has accessed online, but a particular student's process of reading that argument. Once the class is working with some common source materials, the required submission of drafts can help foster interest in how students are reading, especially if the teacher and peers are able to respond to drafts (however briefly) by being asked, in part, "How has this student-writer interpreted the sources? What did s/he choose to focus on (and ignore) in the sources? What consequences do those choices have for his/her argument?" Knowing that an instructor cares about *how* they have read their sources will mean that students are less inclined to see source-use as simple proof that they have "done" the reading.

*7. Put information about plagiarism on your syllabus, but address it only in context*

Exhortations and warnings about plagiarism at the beginning of the semester seem to have little meaning or context for many students. Even though we might, logistically and legalistically, need to have information about academic dishonesty in our syllabi so that we can refer to it later, it makes sense to teach students about plagiarism only once they are actually working with source materials and are beginning to understand what that process looks and feels like. Advance warnings can either paralyze students (by what gets called “plagiarism anxiety” in the scholarship on plagiarism) or perhaps make some students feel that these warnings are as empty as some of the attendance requirements that they too often know they can bend. Once students actually need to quote, they might ask: “Do I need to quote such-and-such, or is that common knowledge?” Or they might ask: “If I use only these two words from the source, do I still need to quote them?” Such questions are meaningful because they have a purposeful context, especially if all the students are reading the same or similar sources; moreover, these questions can be addressed in class as concrete choices writers need to make, or as rules writers need to follow, rather than abstract advance warnings. (See Halasek for a discussion of how students plagiarize less when they have a strong sense of purpose and authority.) As Kathryn Valentine notes, “what we count as plagiarism depends on the context in which we are working” (90), so each class needs to address its own context and its own disciplinary ideas about plagiarism and citation norms.

*8. Teach what plagiarism is and is not; identify kinds of plagiarism via specific examples*

This strategy follows logically from the previous one, and it requires that the instructor set aside some time in class to teach students more specifically about plagiarism. Current research on plagiarism strongly supports the idea that teachers need to actively teach students about plagiarism, not just exhort or punish (see Halasek for a good overview of recent research). This might be accomplished by creating a handout with a few hypothetical passages from student papers that use a source with which the class is familiar. The hypothetical passages might use that source in different ways, some of which constitute plagiarism and some of which do not. For instance, one of the hypothetical student passages might closely paraphrase the source (restating its ideas in the same order as the source), but without citing it. This, of course, constitutes plagiarism—but some students might think it is not plagiarism because the actual words of the source are not used. Another hypothetical student passage might be a patchwork plagiarism, in which bits from various sources are strung together in ways that make the overall content appear to be the student’s own. These examples, then, offer opportunities for a lesson in what plagiarism is. Such specific examples are best discussed while students are in the process of taking notes for their own papers.

*9. Separate actual plagiarism from non-reading, misreading, and/or the use of SparkNotes*

If many students are not reading the sources, some of the preceding strategies can help remedy that situation. However, if a student misreads a source, it can become a learning opportunity if the instructor has

asked for reading notes, annotated bibliographies, and drafts ahead of the actual paper that gets graded. Many years ago I taught a student who wrote a paper about child abduction, who reported in her draft that most abducted children were stolen from white suburban homes by African-American men. When I read her draft, I requested that she meet with me and bring with her a print copy of the source text from which she had gathered this idea. We went over the source together at our meeting, and it quickly became apparent to me that the student had not been able to recognize a characteristic writerly move, whereby the author had begun the article by arguing: “The stereotypical idea about missing children is that ... However, the facts are quite different ... .” In other words, the student got lost in the counter-argument with which the writer had introduced the article. She and I were able to work through her misreading, and in her revision she corrected it. In this way, her misreading became a teachable moment. Of course not all teachers have the time for individual meetings to discuss a draft, but the strategy of limiting the number of readings can help an instructor be familiar with the sources that students are using; moreover, the practice of being genuinely interested in how students are reading can not only mitigate student fears of misreading, but also complicate and enrich our collective sense of what constitutes a misreading.

These nine strategies are intended to help us address plagiarism in the context of teaching students to read sources and to write with source materials; they address plagiarism, that is to say, by keeping the focus on teaching in an environment akin to what my colleague Wayne Rhodes describes, above, as “an RW classroom.” At the end of the day, if an instructor who has used these strategies still encounters plagiarism in student writing, the instructor will more easily be able to distinguish between (a) acts of willful dishonesty, (b)

the consequences of hasty work, (c) carelessness, and (d) lack of training or experience in source use. Making these important, nuanced distinctions can help us address the disciplinary aspects of plagiarism while keeping the focus on a process of instruction in which we as teachers are constantly learning with our students. In the next section, my colleague Eleanor Kutz explores the innovative roles that plagiarism-detection software might play in that learning process.

#### **IV. ELEANOR KUTZ: REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS—WHAT FACULTY NEED TO KNOW ABOUT USING ANTI-PLAGIARISM SOFTWARE IN TEACHING**

While many faculty are re-imagining ways to help their students work creatively with sources as Wayne Rhodes has been doing, learning more about their students’ understandings and motivations as Vivian Zamel suggests, and using specific strategies of the sort Stephen Sutherland recommends, many others, feeling overwhelmed by how easily students draw from Internet sources, are turning to software such as SafeAssign and Turnitin that is designed to help them catch instances of plagiarism by checking assignments that students submit against various online databases. All teachers would love to have an easy solution to one of the more troublesome aspects of teaching—the problem of whether students are indeed doing their own writing and thinking or instead just using the words and ideas of others without working them into their own argument, and without attribution. And anti-plagiarism software looks, at first, like that easy solution:

This is going to be great. It should save me hours because it will trawl through thousands of pages of material on the databases and find

spots where text has been lifted. I hope it will be a quick and relatively thorough means of finding out where students plagiarise and highlight those spots for me. It takes me so long at the moment and even though I can spend a couple of hours checking suspect papers, I'm never really convinced that I've got everyone. This could be the answer. (Australian faculty member quoted in Sutherland-Smith and Carr, 96)

In my own teaching, I have long tried to learn what motivates the ways in which my students work with sources and to guide their practices with all research, online or off; toward this end I've guided their own inquiries into the discourse practices of both non-academic and academic discourse communities so that they could see what was involved in their own processes of appropriating and internalizing new discourses (Kutz). I felt that the writing assignments I created were sufficiently individualized, not easily lending themselves to plagiarism. But I've also been working with other faculty on using educational technology and trying to learn more about the tools that they were interested in. Since increasing numbers of our faculty were requesting SafeAssign (available to UMass faculty through the Blackboard learning management system), I decided I needed to try it out in my own teaching, find out how others were using it, and discover what research had been done into the accuracy of anti-plagiarism software. As a member of the English department and long-time teacher of both freshman writing and of graduate students who are or will become teachers of writing in high schools and colleges, I wanted to know, for my own students and colleagues, what's important to understand about how these tools work, what safeguards are needed, when and how to implement them

effectively, and how to shape a larger pedagogical context that will help our students understand and care about authority and authorship.

I started by adding the SafeAssign option to my Blackboard site for a graduate course I was teaching on "Teaching English with Technology"—a course that enrolls many teachers and prospective teachers. SafeAssign will check papers and provide a report to a teacher. But it also offers a draft mode in which students can submit their own papers and receive their own reports. For either mode, any material that has been drawn from another source (including correctly quoted and cited material) will be highlighted, with a link to where the material can be found. Teachers also have the option of having student work be added to an institutional database, so that future student submissions will be checked against prior ones.

I asked my graduate students to try out SafeAssign by choosing a piece of their writing from any class to submit in draft mode and then reporting on the results and what they learned. They generally found the software to be useful in highlighting material that came from other sources. Brittany Wadbrook, an English MA student who is currently teaching freshman writing at UMass, offered a typical response on her course blog:

*I got 4% and it only highlighted one sentence, which was a sentence in quotes. It highlights the quote and provides the website where the highlighted material was detected. Then, I can click on the website where the information came from. This is great if the material is not cited, because then I can see what types of sources my students are reading and selecting from. Also, I can click on the highlighted material itself, and it will show me how much the text matches (in my case 91% which makes sense for a direct quote) and then you*

*don't even need to navigate away from SafeAssign because it shows you the uploaded manuscript text and the Internet Source side-by-side so you don't even need to search the website for [the] place where the student copied data from! This, I think, is great.*

Brittany also submitted a heavily plagiarized text and again received appropriate results.

So SafeAssign did seem to catch significant copying of other texts. But did that make it a useful pedagogical tool, one that would help me give my students better guidance in their work with sources rather than just doing a better job of policing what they did? To try to figure this out, I submitted some early drafts of research papers done by some of my former freshman students, and I received interesting and more complicated results. For example, one student who had followed her ethnographic study of a non-academic community (a nightclub where she worked) with research into an issue related to that community (in this case, prostitution) had relied heavily on quoted material in her draft, and this material was flagged/highlighted, but the accuracy of the quotations varied from 100% down to 68%, showing that she often wasn't quoting her sources accurately. At the same time, some material that the student had paraphrased showed a closer match to the original (72%) than some of what she had presented as direct quotations. The extent of highlighted material also made it clear just how heavily her reliance on her sources was in this early draft. I had addressed that issue with her in subsequent revisions, and her final paper had been more strongly shaped around her own argument, with a much more judicious choice of supporting evidence from her sources. But, judging from the SafeAssign reports I now had at hand, I can see that previously I hadn't caught the fact that she was quoting her sources inaccurately,

and I didn't give her as much help as she needed in learning how to paraphrase. Would having a SafeAssign report have helped both of us to see these issues more clearly? I now believe it would have.

The next phase of my own inquiry was to find out what others had discovered about plagiarism software and what lessons I might take away from their endeavors. Other faculty and librarians have been running their own informal experiments with these sites, constructing heavily plagiarized essays and submitting them for review. Results seem to vary, depending on the source materials used, but typically, some instances of copying are missed. Catherine Pellegrino, a librarian at St. Mary's College, reports on one such experiment in her academic blog, in which she found that SafeAssign identified 10 out of 15 copied passages (using Google allowed her to find 8 of them). SafeAssign did better at identifying paraphrased passages, while Google did better with content from JSTOR and Project Muse. But SafeAssign most often pointed to website sources, even when the content had originally been drawn from licensed databases. Similar experiments suggest that SafeAssign is particularly helpful for identifying the web content that students are most likely to draw on, but it isn't foolproof. From this information I've drawn *Lesson #1. The most commonly used software (Turnitin and SafeAssign) does not identify all cases of plagiarism.*

Beyond informal inquiries, there have been several carefully researched studies, including one carried out at the University of Texas (Gillis et al.). The researchers submitted 356 freshman essays (typical 10-page research papers with 8-10 sources) to both Turnitin and SafeAssign, following up with a careful analysis of a random sample of 40 essays. Both tools showed that the full sample of 356 essays fell into a range that suggested what the software showed as "low risk" of plagiarism (with less than

24% of the text showing a match with other sources). Both flagged material from web sources and student sources (the institutional database of student work) but not from print materials. There were some differences in what the two tools showed (in the percentage of instances flagged, the percentage of instances that were citation errors, and the number of sources flagged). SafeAssign showed all matches it found with other text, whether correctly quoted and cited or not. SafeAssign flagged fewer matches to the student data-base, and where it did so, papers were sometimes flagged based on students citing the same source—for example, a student’s discussion of three different topics related to birth control was flagged because all three cited a link to the website of Planned Parenthood. From this study, I’ve drawn *Lesson #2. Much of what is identified as a match to materials on the web or in institutional databases of student work has other explanations besides intentional plagiarism.*

For their closer analysis, after eliminating all correctly cited text (which is flagged by both programs), Gillis et al. began by asking “*what* the marked text rhetorically represents,” looking carefully at the context in which it appeared. They found that 70% of the text marked by Turnitin and 83% by SafeAssign fell into four categories: the use of a **topic term** (such as global warming); a **topic phrase** (e.g., “global warming is a serious problem”); a **commonly used phrase** (e.g., “there are many risks associated with global warming”; “researchers have found that \_\_\_”); and **jargon** (words typically attached to discussions of a specific topic such as “global surface temperature, “climate model,” “global dimming”). The remaining matches were actual citation errors—which could have been either accidental or intentional. In the end, Gillis et al. did not recommend the adoption of either tool at the University of Texas. They were concerned that students, in their attempts to avoid “plagiarism” by using the com-

mon terms and phrases of a field’s discourse, would be likely to turn to quick fixes like the thesaurus and end up avoiding the “expert, insider prose,” they should have been acquiring, writing instead to the software. Their conclusion? “The applications’ approach to writing is inconsistent with WAC [Writing Across the Curriculum] pedagogy. That is, in lieu of good pedagogy, the applications often penalize students for doing exactly what we want them to do: learn the basic language structures used by people who are writing about a common topic in a given discipline” (52). As Wayne Rhodes has suggested above, drawing on such structures is not necessarily an act of theft, but is often an essential aspect of embracing and trying out new discourses. And that leads me to *Lesson #3. The use of such software in identifying actual plagiarism requires careful instructor interpretation of the results.*

Nevertheless, I’ve come to believe that, with a clear understanding of what the software does and does not do, it can be useful as a learning tool for students if they are given the opportunity to learn about its capabilities and limitations in an appropriate teaching context. In such a context, students could, for example,

- Be given the opportunity to submit their essays as drafts;
- Be taught what the individual reports show, including the ways in which the appropriate use of common terms and phrases may be flagged;
- Be given the opportunity to change their work for resubmission (where they have actually paraphrased inadequately or missed a citation);
- Be asked to provide a narrative account of what in their work should stand as it is.

The faculty interviewed by Sutherland-

Smith and Carr in their study at South Coast University in Australia reached similar conclusions. While they were disappointed to find that the software they were using (Turnitin) would not prove to be a foolproof and simple tool for addressing all plagiarism, they came to believe that “it could perform a useful function in heightening awareness of plagiarism as an issue of academic integrity, where subject-specific exercises were developed and students were invited to submit their own work” (101).

My own conclusions: I am very concerned with helping students develop the range of literacies they need to be successful in academic settings. As those settings have drawn increasingly on educational technology (including the use of learning management systems and other online resources to create a virtual classroom environment), I have seen it as my responsibility when teaching first year students to prepare them as readers and writers for such an environment. And if tools like SafeAssign are likely to be used in their other courses, I would want them to understand how these tools work, and what they can learn from them.

If I were currently teaching undergraduates, I’d not only show them how to submit drafts of assignments but I’d have them work in peer response groups to a) review their drafts and the SafeAssign reports; b) identify the reasons for any “matches” that appeared, using the terms suggested by Gillis et al. for the sorts of typical academic discourse that are often picked up as “matches”—topic terms, topic phrases, commonly used phrases and disciplinary jargon—as well as instances of problems with paraphrase and citation; and c) decide on appropriate changes—not so much to get a wholly clean report but to get a report they could explain and defend. Since every user seems to agree that the SafeAssign reports need to be interpreted, we need to teach students how to interpret

them also. But above all, I’d want to engage them with larger questions about why and when they borrow the words of others, and what it means to do so creatively and originally, making something of their own from what they’ve found. And tools like SafeAssign, while they can show students where their borrowings are likely to violate academic norms, won’t, by themselves, give students a richer picture of ways to work as writers. Those ways are typically much more complicated than any plagiarism-checker can begin to suggest.

### **CONCLUSION: PUTTING INTERNET PLAGIARISM IN CONTEXT FOR STUDENTS**

What constitutes academic literacy is changing in a digital age. If literacy involves being able to use reading and writing appropriately for particular contexts and purposes, then teaching in an academic context in which much knowledge is shaped and exchanged in online environments requires that we help students learn how to navigate those environments—whether course sites like Blackboard, databases like JSTOR, or the World Wide Web. And we need to help them understand that their evolving social practices for drawing material from online resources are often at odds with the expectations of their professors. Here are a few proven or potentially effective responses.

*1. Make students aware of the problem of Internet plagiarism by giving them up-to-date instruction and information, not simply by pointing to an existing honor code.*

It seems that timely instruction can make a difference. In a study of 573 students and 1,256 papers at Rutgers where students in paired courses were randomly assigned to a control group or a group that took a required online plagiarism tutorial, the amount of plagiarism was reduced by two thirds in the tutorial group (Dee and

Jacob). The tutorial and self-quiz they used, along with other plagiarism resources, were developed collaboratively by Colby, Bates and Bowdoin Colleges, and can be found at the CBB Plagiarism Resource website.

2. Give students specific strategies for how to draw from online materials in their writing in appropriate ways.

The strategies Stephen Sutherland has discussed above offer a helpful starting point, and students can work together to share others that they discover.

3. In using anti-plagiarism software, let students submit their drafts, and help them to understand how the software works, what the reports tell them, and how they might use that information not only to avoid plagiarism but also to defend themselves against a potential, unwarranted charge of plagiarism in a future course.

4. Put all "plagiarism" in context (whether or not it involves the Internet) by learning about what students are thinking and responding to their concerns.

While some students may indeed be borrowing the words of others as an easy way out of an assignment, you might learn that others, like Vivian's student Kwan, are quoting to learn how to use new words and phrases, to see how to "make them mine."

5. Consider plagiarism itself in a larger cultural context.

The world in which writers—students or professionals—are operating is changing rapidly, challenging our old knowledge and understandings, and challenging, even, the potential of software to safeguard against the violation of old norms. Engaging students in a richer inquiry into issues of creativity, authorship, and ownership can offer new ground from which they can contemplate responsible practices appropriate to the different discourse communities for which they'll write.

#### WORKS CITED

- Blakley, Johanna. "Lessons from Fashion's Free Culture." *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading*, April 2010. Web. May 2010.
- Burg, Barbara, et al. *Writing with Internet Sources*. Harvard, 2007. Web. <[http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/inside/student\\_services/Writing\\_with\\_Internet\\_Sources.pdf](http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/inside/student_services/Writing_with_Internet_Sources.pdf)>.
- CBB Plagiarism Resource Site. Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin Colleges. November 2003. Web. 30 June 2011. <<http://abacus.bates.edu/cbb/index8698.html?q=node/60>>.
- Code of Academic Conduct, UMass Boston. Web. 30 June, 2011. <<http://www.umb.edu/academics/undergraduate/office/students/CodeofStudentConduct.html>>.
- Dee, Thomas and Brian Jacob. "Rational Ignorance in Education: A Field Experiment in Student Plagiarism." NBER Working Papers. January 2010. Web. 30 June 2011. <<http://www.nber.org/papers/w15672.pdf>>.
- "Flatfish Fossils Fill in a Missing Link." *University of Chicago News*. July 9, 2008. Web. <<http://news.uchicago.edu/article/2008/07/09/flatfish-fossils-fill-missing-link>>.
- Gabriel, Trip. "Plagiarism Lines Blur for Students in Digital Age." *NYTimes* August 1, 2010. Web. 30 June, 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/education/02cheat.html?emc=eta1>>.
- Gillis, Kathleen, Susan Lang, Monica Norris and Laura Palmer. "Electronic Plagiarism Checkers: Barriers to Developing an Academic Voice." *The WAC Journal* 20, November 2009, 51-62. Web. 30 June, 2011 <<http://wac.colostate.edu/journal/vol20/gillis.pdf>>.
- Halasek, Kay. "Review: Theorizing Plagiarism in the University." *College English* 73.5 (May 2011): 548-68. Print.
- Howard, Rebecca Moore. "Plagiarisms, Authorships, and the Academic Death Penalty." *College English* 57.7 (Nov. 1995): 708-36. Print.
- Hull, Glynda and Mike Rose. "Rethinking Remediation: Toward a Social-Cognitive Understanding of Problematic Reading and Writing." *Written Communication* 6 (1989): 139-54. Print.
- Johnson, Jason. "Cut-and-Paste Is a Skill Too." *The Washington Post*, March 25, 2007. Web. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/>

- 2007/03/23/AR2007032301612.html>.
- Kutz, Eleanor. *Exploring Literacy. A Guide to Reading, Writing, and Research*. New York: Longman, 2004.
- Lessig, Lawrence. *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy*. New York: Penguin, 2008. Print.
- Lethem, Jonathan. "The Ecstasy of Influence: A Plagiarism." *Harper's*. February, 2007. Web. <<http://www.harpers.org/archive/2007/02/0081387>>
- McCarthy, Susan. *Becoming a Tiger: How Baby Animals Learn to Live in the Wild*. New York: Harper Collins, 2004. Print.
- Pellegrino, Catherine. "SafeAssign vs. Google for Plagiarism Detection." *Spurious Tuples: Flapping the Unflappable Since 1996*. Web. March 30, 2010. <<http://www.spurioustuples.net/?p=384>>.
- Polito, Robert. "Bob Dylan: Henry Timrod Revisited." *Poetry Foundation*. 2007. Web. <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/article/178703>>.
- Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary*. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- Sutherland-Smith, Wendy and Rodney Carr. "Turnitin.com: Teachers' Perspectives of Anti-Plagiarism Software in Raising Issues of Educational Integrity." *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* 2 (3), 2005, 92-101. Web. 30 June, 2011 <<http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol2/iss3/10>>
- Sutherland, Stephen. "Writing Sources: Interrupting Three 'Residual' Assumptions at the Threshold Between Reading and Writing." *Reader: Essays in Reader-Oriented Theory, Criticism, and Pedagogy*. Forthcoming.
- Swanson, Don R. "On the Fragmentation of Knowledge, the Connection Explosion, and Assembling Other People's Ideas." *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*. Vol. 27, No. 3 February/March 2001. Web. <<http://www.asis.org/Bulletin/Mar-01/swanson.html>>.
- Thomas, Richard F. "The Streets of Rome: The Classical Dylan." *Oral Tradition*, 22/1 (2007): 30-56. Web. <<http://journal.oral-tradition.org/issues/22i/Thomas>>.
- Valentine, Kathryn. "Plagiarism as Literacy Practice: Recognizing and Rethinking Ethical Binaries." *College Composition and Communication* 58.1 (Sept. 2006): 89-109. Print.
- Wadbrook, Brittany. "Journal Week 3, Activity 2." English 613 Blog, June 20, 2010. Web. 30 June, 2011. <<http://brwadbrook.tumblr.com/page/2>>.
- Waters, Muddy. "Interview No. 1," by Alan Lomax. *The Complete Plantation Recordings*. Chess Records, 1993. CD.
- Whitehead, Kevin. Review of "Sax in the City." *Fresh Air*: Host Terry Gross. Natl. Public Radio, 3 June, 2009. *NPR.org*. Web. <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=104871379>>.
- Williams, Paul. *Bob Dylan: Performing Artist 1960-1973*. London: Omnibus, 1994. Print.
- Zwagerman, Sean. "The Scarlet P: Plagiarism, Panopticism, and the Rhetoric of Academic Integrity." *College Composition and Communication* 59.4 (June 2008): 676-710. Print.