To paraphrase an early observer of networks, it is a truth universally acknowledged that plagiarism is rampant among college undergraduates and the Internet is to blame; such a statement has been made so often in recent times that it almost seems to be a universal truth. Plagiarism is a contentious issue that needs to be examined closely, and this means we must look beyond the surface realities to the underlying causes in order to find remedies that are in keeping with the academic goals of respecting the scholarship of others and fostering new ideas in college students. Librarians can play a strong role in the ongoing discussions of academic integrity and academic dishonesty on college campuses.

BACKGROUND
As director of libraries at SUNY Cortland in Cortland, NY, I serve as an administrator in the Academic Affairs Division. In 2000, I was appointed chair of the Academic Grievance Tribunal (AGT) by the provost and vice president for academic affairs. As tribunal chair, I became the administrative designee for the provost who is charged with maintaining academic integrity on campus. I was to convene the hearings for charges of academic dishonesty and to send the tribunal's recommendations of guilty or not guilty to the provost for final judgment. As part of the process for upholding academic integrity, the tribunal is composed of students and faculty. As the administrative representative, I vote only to break a tie. My role is intended to be administrative: coordinating hearings; ensuring confidentiality; facilitating paperwork and writing the tribunal's recommendations; and communicating with the provost concerning the grievance process.

Over the years as AGT chair, I have heard all the cases where the accused student has denied the charges of academic dishonesty. This process has opened my eyes to the situation of academic dishonesty and academic integrity on our campus and on other campuses. Before my appointment, my interaction with faculty and administrators concerning plagiarism was as a kind of antiplagiarism enforcer, where I assisted faculty in tracking down sources in cases of alleged plagiarism, or I made final recommendations in cases involving damaged library materials. Also, at the request of the Academic Writing Department, along with other SUNY Cortland librarians, I began to incorporate some information about citing sources into the Composition Library Instruction Program.

Serving as AGT chair sharpened my understanding of faculty and their relationships to research, textual analysis, teaching, and the stimulation of new ideas. I was also able to sharpen my view of the students' world and their relationship to information and the technology that underpins their lives. Over the years, I have consulted with faculty as they wrestle with academic dishonesty and its consequences. I have counseled students on the procedures and on the consequences of their actions. I have served as a resource person in the wider campus discussions and debates on academic integrity.

With these expanded views of the academic world in which the library provides support and partnerships, I was able to see that librarians could assume a strong, active role in the process of modeling academic integrity within the institution. I believe that librarians can serve as more than just "plagiarism busters," but this does require that librarians improve their own knowledge of the debates concerning academic integrity. With an understanding of the world of information as viewed and manipulated by students, the college librarian is able to actively promote a more complex understanding of the Internet, electronic databases, and a critical approach to research and writing.

In the cases that I have heard on academic dishonesty, I am more convinced than ever that a librarian's understanding of the Internet and the flow of scholarly information would be helpful in not only avoiding academic dishonesty, but also in developing a strong expressive voice in the student-scholar, one who uses information wisely and appropriately in support of original ideas. While I have seen outright, flaunted dishonesty, more often than not I see a disparity between the values of academic integrity espoused by the institution and its faculty and the student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. This disparity is not because students are more dishonest or lack a moral center, but that their experiences—particularly with Web-based transfer of information—has led them to form different attitudes towards information, authorship, and intellectual property. About students and their reactions in the
healings and to discussions on academic integrity, I have several observations:

- Students are often very confused about paraphrasing "putting it into your own words" and attributing sources.
- Students are often unable or unwilling to attend to the detail of properly formatting attributions. They are focused on the end product. More often than not, haste and speed influence their decision to plagiarize.
- Students are very confused about what they see as mixed messages from faculty about group work and collaborative projects. They are confused with instructions to work together but to produce their own, unique individual work. They are very willing to share answers and information with their peers. One student tribunal member told me that even though she knew it was wrong, according to policy, to share her work with other students, she would still do it because it was the right thing to do.
- Students do not consider their own original work as something worthwhile and worthy of being protected. This is particularly true in classes where they have little or no interest or see no value of the subject to their everyday lives. The goal is to get through it and get it done so they can go on to the more interesting work.
- Students do not critically analyze information, particularly Web-based sources. All information is equal, truthful, and has the same value—free and available.

As members of an academic community, librarians want to foster respect for the work of scholars from whose work we draw wisdom. Moreover, as scholars, we want to create our own ideas and contribute to our professional canon or body of knowledge. We want our students to have the same kind of respect for what has gone before and to have the same opportunity to become scholars and thinkers as well. We often fail to see that they do not yet have these values and desires. As institutions and teachers, we will fail in our efforts to instill these values in students if we are fixated on uncovering plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Our lens must be widened to understand students and their technology-infused world, and then use that understanding to model the academic integrity to them.

**Understanding Students and the Internet**

Recent studies indicate that, to a high level, students admit to plagiarizing from both conventional and Internet sources—38 percent for conventional sources and 40 percent for Internet sources. These studies ask the students to self-identify their behavior, and researchers such as Donald McCabe of Rutgers University, founder of the National Center for Academic Integrity, think "it is actually far more prevalent today because many students don't consider cut-and-paste Internet copying as cheating." Joe Kraus, an English professor at Kings College, also reports that students view plagiarism as a minor problem:

The more I talk with students like him, the more I am convinced that a rapidly growing number simply do not see plagiarism as wrong in the ways my colleagues and I assume they do. They recognize that they should not do it, but they understand our concern over it to be an almost quaint prohibition. It has become a misdemeanor in the eyes of a new generation, something on the order of jaywalking or sneaking a grape while shopping for produce.

It is my experience in talking with students accused of academic dishonesty that they believe firmly that they are moral, honest, and ethical people and would never do something as dishonest as to steal. They do not see plagiarism as stealing.

Their views about plagiarism come from a generation raised on information from the media or from the Internet that is often not attributed according to scholarly standards. So rather than deploring their lack of moral rectitude, we need to understand the media-infused world in which they live, work, and play. Kraus states, "... our students' willingness to plagiarize grows out of their having a different relationship to culture ... their experiences with ideas have been so dramatically different from ours that, on the question of individual authorship, many of them need more than a full semester before they are ready to enter into a conversation with us."

An article on a related issue sheds some light on the attitudes of students. Reporting on file sharing, *American Demographics* considers the idea that young people do not download music in a renegade attempt to dismantle the recording industry, but rather in an attempt to get the music they like, in defiance of a deregulated media industry that has married recording companies with broadcast companies. The result was a "revolution in music delivery [that] occurred in reaction to the industry's mismanagement, not to mention its complicity in forcing the public a flavorless diet of sonic pabulum." Students work in the realms of easy access and transfer of information, mostly without authorship or attribution. Moreover, they are more than willing, as music file sharing demonstrates, to develop networks and processes to share not only the music but the information that they need without regard for issues such as ownership or intellectual property rights.

Further, DeVoss and Rosati write that students are "adapting their literacy, research, reading, and writing skills and processes to the virtual space—and complexity to the World Wide Web." While student relationships to information and writing are changing, the attitudes of faculty and librarians remain within the traditions of the academy. This communication disconnect means that we seem to send students mixed messages when we ask them to be original on the one hand and then tell them to document ideas carefully on the other. This may motivate students to plagiarize either deliberately or unintentionally:

... we tell students that plagiarism is an 'academic crime,' but we often assume they understand what that means and that they hold academic honesty policies in as high esteem as we do. Asking a student to create original ideas encourages plagiarism in the sense that students often feel the need to consult sources for help. We ask students not just for their insights, but for their original ideas, ideas that must also—in some instances—be 'correct.'

We need to bridge that disparity of definitions and attitudes so that honest students can function in a world of scholarship and ideas, and we must help them to be successful in the academic world and in the profession of their choice. The effort calls for careful and engaged discussions with students as we begin to understand that technology frames student thinking and values. It takes patience while...
the students form their understanding of the world of scholarship and research.

**Faculty, Academic Institutions, and Plagiarism**

In building bridges to student understanding of academic values, faculty can do two things. The first is to model academic integrity as an institutional norm, including open and honest discussions about the problems and tensions involved in being a successful scholar and creative thinker. The second is to develop thoughtful projects and assignments that foster critical thinking and do not contribute to plagiarism, either intentionally or inadvertently.

An important part of developing an understanding of academic integrity is to engage in ongoing discussions of plagiarism and cheating that abandon the highly colored, emotional language that labels all plagiarists, intentional and unintentional alike, with criminal language. This is often difficult because as I have observed in my time as tribunal chair, faculty have strong emotional responses to plagiarism. Their range from a gleeful “gotcha!” to feelings of anger, betrayal, and dismay. The discovery of plagiarism can often create a breach of faith between student and teacher and contribute to an ongoing mistrust between them. At that point, the discourse degenerates and becomes one of crime and punishment.

It is appropriate to discuss academic dishonesty, consequences, and punishments, for plagiarism does exist and is a violation of the norms of our institutions. Policies need to be clear and well communicated, and the procedures should be swift and appropriate. The discussions on dishonesty need to be unemotional and compassionate. Dishonesty and punishment are easier to discuss because they seem more quantifiable.

The broader discussion of academic honesty is more difficult because it is part of the difficulties discussing morals and ethics. Often, students and faculty have different perspectives and language when speaking of ethical issues, so communication becomes difficult and fraught with misunderstanding. Moreover, an unrelenting pursuit of proper documentation has the potential to squelch the creative flow of original ideas that build on the words and thoughts of our academic forebears.

In an eloquent article on the consequences of plagiarism, Maurice Isserman calls for the academy to review its black-and-white view of plagiarism and examine the gray areas of unintentional plagiarism. He says that we need to understand that “repeating the words of those that came before us is essential to intellectual endeavor. We are links in the great chain of teaching.” We do this to create a frame of reference and shared knowledge.

At the beginning of this article, I playfully paraphrased the opening words of a Jane Austen novel. In earlier times, I could depend on many readers to catch the reference and the joke without having to explain. Today, shared knowledge and intellectual context cannot be assumed, so a shared social context needs to be patiently nurtured and grown. Even so, it cannot be assumed that students will immediately agree about dishonesty, plagiarism, and integrity just because we tell them plagiarism is wrong or immoral. Isserman points out that we will destroy the process of understanding if we focus solely on attributing every reference. He goes on to say that students should be encouraged to become impassioned by their love of the subject and to “own your words.” We inspire this excitement by a balanced approach to the use of the language of others and by encouraging students to know that their own ideas are important.

Students need to understand that by plagiarizing the words of others, they are not allowing their own academic voice to grow and be heard. Consequently, students are damaging their potential as human beings and as scholars. Isserman quotes Hamilton College reference librarian Julia Schult as saying, “plagiarism isn’t a bad thing simply because it’s intellectual theft—although it is that. It’s a bad thing because it takes the place of and prevents learning.”

This passionate view of learning is what we desire to instill in our students by capturing their imagination with our own enthusiasm, knowledge, and scrupulous honesty. Ben Rosamond suggests that a “more effective route [to combating plagiarism] would involve thinking about effective ways of reinforcing academic good practice that do not rely solely on coercive apparatuses... This means directing attention to socializing students and junior colleagues into the norms of professional academic life rather than simply issuing the threat of sanction.” He suggests attention to the research process, including detailed record keeping and good time management. These strategies work because the antiplagiarism strategies are contextualized within their work as students. Moreover, they are preventative and rely on process instead of an after-the-fact detection. In developing these kinds of processes, we model the values we wish to make normative. On a practical level, modeling and teaching integrity is done by defining expectations and developing policies that are prompt and appropriate; we can explain plagiarism in the syllabus and we can develop a sense of shared values through discussion.

Widely debated in academic institutions is the role of technology-based detection software such as Turnitin.com and The Glatt Plagiarism Teaching Program. Many contend that the presence and use of such software serve as a deterrent to plagiarism and cheating. The president of Turnitin.com has said that “digital plagiarism is a digital problem and demands a digital solution.” Syracuse University professor of writing and rhetoric, Rebecca Moore Howard, rebuts this argument by saying that “Teaching, not software is the key to preventing plagiarism.” Faculty at SUNY Cortland have raised the issue that purchasing detection software betrays the trust between faculty and students and tells them on some level that we do not trust their own integrity and honor. By using the software, they say, institutions perpetuate an environment of mistrust and widen the gap between students and faculty. Other faculty use detection software as one of the many tools and strategies for preventing plagiarism and for promoting an environment of integrity and honesty.

**Librarians, Plagiarism, and Academic Integrity**

Because librarians have multiple roles as defenders of intellectual and academic freedom, as facilitators of information, and as teachers using the Internet intelligently, librarians can actively promote academic integrity on college campuses. Librarians should enter into the discussions on academic integrity and dishonesty, since what happens in the classroom between faculty and student inevitably influences use of the library and its resources.

May 2004 239
Librarians help the faculty to detect plagiarism. C. Brian Smith outlines six detection strategies for librarians and educators:

1. Librarians share knowledge of Internet sources of materials to purchase, such as term paper mills;
2. Librarians teach faculty to go deeper and search online databases and other resources not reached by search engines;
3. Involve tutors in writing centers and other academic support areas;
4. Librarians provide help through Web sites discussing plagiarism and proper citation;
5. Librarians assist faculty in redesigning coursework;
6. To use the plagiarism detection software.

Librarians can provide vital assistance and understanding in the process of detecting plagiarism.

Librarians also need to move beyond the plagiarism detective mode to become proactive. They must assume their role of experts in locating and evaluating information. Rather than react to plagiarism after the fact, librarians can assist faculty in preventing plagiarism. In Library Journal, Editor Francine Fialkoff reports a conversation: "Harvard Instructional Services Librarian Cheryl LaGuardia says librarians need to be more proactive in teaching students, and faculty, not just how to navigate and assess what's on the net but what is legitimate use and what is not." In doing so, we promote the intelligent use of information and the authorship, "We need to teach students what intellectual property is ... when students think of themselves as authors working with an idea they've constructed, it becomes personal." Auer and Krupa state that librarians "as research and information experts, should help faculty examine their existing or future assignments to determine the case with which students could plagiarize." By expanding the librarians' perspective to be more proactive, the six strategies that Smith proposes can also be expanded. It is more effective to prevent plagiarism than to spend time detecting it after it happens. Here is a six-point strategy for librarians to promote academic integrity:

1. Become a champion for the intelligent, ethical uses of information by knowing the definitions of academic integrity and dishonesty and by incorporating values into reference and instructional services, as well as by participating in the campus-wide and interdisciplinary debates on academic integrity.

2. Teach the complexities of the Web-based resources, which include the searching of proprietary databases that are not reached by Web search engines, and by moving beyond plagiarism detection to teach the critical thinking skills needed to intelligently evaluate information resources of all kinds.

3. Develop partnerships with many other departments and disciplines in order to model and teach the complex role that information has in our lives.

4. Disseminate information through Web sites, tutorials, and other instructional materials that reflect on the relationship between the ethical use of information and academic integrity.

5. Work with faculty to develop assignments that emphasize active learning and interactions with scholarly materials and class exercises that emphasize the research process, good study skills, and sound time management.

6. Balance the use of detection software with preventative behaviors such as honest discussions during instructional sessions and during reference encounters.

In my role as AGT chair at SUNY Cortland, I offered workshops to students about academic dishonesty, and at the request of faculty often visited their classes to discuss the issues of honesty and cheating. I served on the Academic Integrity Task Force, helping the faculty analyze existing procedures and engage in ongoing conversations about the issue of plagiarism. For the past two semesters, I have teamed with one of the librarians who teaches the students how to write citations. Through active learning exercises, she teaches them the commas, colons, and word order of citations, while I teach them the reasons behind it. This process is not perfect yet, but the students have managed to ask insightful questions and are able to correct the mistakes in

---

### Figure 1

**The Information Literacy Process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Defining</th>
<th>What is the problem I have to solve?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What information do I need?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do I know already?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What more do I need to find out?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locating</th>
<th>Where can I find the information that I need?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which sources best meet my needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where can I find these resources?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selecting</th>
<th>How can I search these sources effectively?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are there any clues and cues to help me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How will I record the information I find?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How will I credit my sources?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organising</th>
<th>How can I organise this information so I can understand it better?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does it need a special order?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How can I arrange it so it is more easily understood by others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do I need more information?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presenting</th>
<th>How can I share this information with other people?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who will be my audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the best format?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do I need more information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have I included everything I want to share?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessing</th>
<th>What have I learned from this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did I answer my focus question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which parts did I do really well?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which parts would I change if I did it again?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which parts do I need support with in the future?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
our handout materials. We also have lively discussions on the
details and implications of the campus statement on academic
integrity. The students have become engaged in the process
of learning something that had seemed irrelevant and tedious
to them.
In concrete terms, how can we develop ways that students
can see their work as personal creations worth protecting? And
what models of process-oriented assignments can we assist
faculty in developing? Barbara Braxton suggests that students
use an information literacy process that asks a series of
questions. The questions in the model below guide the student
through the process of analyzing their assignment. These steps
focus on their research work rather than the end product
(Figure 1).
In this model, two questions in the “Selecting” section
provide a potential to discuss citations, attributing sources:
How will I record the information I find? and How will I
credit my sources? Both questions are opportunities to talk
about direct quotation and paraphrasing. This is an opportunity
to guide students through a process where they can distinguish
between their own original ideas and the ideas of others. The
process of research is usually new or uncomfortable for
students, so asking them to consider questions that seem
obvious to us is very appropriate. Some additional guiding
questions can more explicitly help students develop their own
understanding of academic integrity. I have developed several
questions that can enhance the information literacy model and
make it into an integrated model of information literacy and
integrity:
Finding my ideas
• What is my understanding of this subject?
• Is there another way to look at this subject that has not been
  said?
• How do I present my ideas?
• Can I support my ideas with facts and writings from other
  scholars?
• Have I presented my own ideas with convincing strength?
Citing sources
• Have I included all the quotations in the proper format?
• Have I attributed the ideas that I put into my own words that
  are still the ideas of another person? Have I formatted the
  reference properly?

Librarians can use this enhanced model (see Figure 2) in
information and literacy programs and in reference services. At
the reference desk, individual encounters with students provide
excellent opportunities to discuss the process of good research
and the analysis of information. We can guide them through the

---

**Figure 2**

Information Literacy and Integrity Model

![Diagram of the Information Literacy and Integrity Model](image-url)
evolution of their own ideas as we assist them with locating and evaluating information.

One of the strengths of this information literacy and academic integrity model is that the component parts can be extracted as needed and rearranged to suit the needs of the student or faculty. This is important in our encounters at the reference desk, where students approach us at different stages in their research. By assessing where they are in their project, we can foreground the appropriate questions for them to ask themselves. As a librarian and as a library director, I have always looked at the individual services of the library as part of a patchwork. Just as students cut and paste their way to dishonesty, we cut and piece our services to fit their needs, and then we can sew them together as part of a whole. By paying attention to all of the components, we can guide students through the process of scholarly research. In many cases, the patterns will be different but still functional, original, and properly attributed. By incorporating the librarians’ knowledge of research, the complexities of information, we transform cut-and-paste into a reorganized pattern that recognizes the work of scholars and students.

By consciously integrating academic integrity into our interactions of students and faculty, librarians fulfill their roles as members of academic communities. The partnerships with faculty in teaching and learning, the individual mentoring through reference services, and dissemination of information through Web sites, handouts, and presentations all help us contribute to the creation of vibrant scholarship. The myriad services offered by librarians teach us to be flexible and creative as we cut and piece our understanding of information into a pattern of functional beauty. While the technologies of the Internet and electronic media continue to transform our society, the fundamental values and traditions of the academy and the library profession continue to prepare students for this world.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The opening line to Jane Austen’s 1813 novel Pride and Prejudice, which reads “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.”


