

Chapter 9

Original Writing in a Remix Culture: Challenges and Solutions for Addressing Plagiarism

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ABSTRACT

A new era of educational instruction was ushered in with the advent of 2020. Students, educators, and administrators had to rethink content delivery during a global pandemic. The move to online instruction introduced challenges, among which is the challenge of promoting original writing in the digital age. Technology has contributed to a remix culture that encourages patchwork assemblage of existing works and ideas. Accustomed to having information available at their fingertips, learners often have little conception of the origins or ownership of the information. With increasing shifts to remote education, instruction must evolve to clearly define what constitutes original writing and academic integrity. This chapter explores plagiarism, academic dishonesty, and the influence of technology across the differentiated remote settings of K-12 and higher education. Strategies for addressing academic dishonesty and fostering integrity are explored from the perspectives of students, educators, curriculum developers, and administrators.

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INTRODUCTION

The educational landscape changed markedly with the introduction of the Internet. Gone are the days of students researching a topic in isolation within the confines of library stacks and hardcover texts. Today's students are digitally sophisticated consumers of media and technology. The Pew Research Center reported that adults' Internet usage increased by 84% between 2000 and 2015, with younger Americans between the ages of 18 and 49 reporting a 94% increase (Perrin & Duggan, 2015). Access to the Internet has also expanded in schools. In its 2019 *State of the States Report*, EducationSuperHighway (ESH) asserted that the "classroom connectivity gap has been closed" (p.3). Following efforts in 2014 by the Federal Communications Commission to expand the availability of digital learning in K-12 classrooms, ESH reported that 99.2% of American school districts in 2019 had the fiber optics infrastructure needed to provide digital learning to students (p. 7).

Children's access to the Internet at home has likewise expanded in recent years. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2020) analyzed data from the American Community Survey (ACS) compiled by the United States Census Bureau. The ACS data suggested that 94% of American children between the ages of three and 18 years had home Internet access via either a computer or smartphone (NCES, 2020, para.3).

Younger generation students are coming of age in a time of expansive social media sharing, collaboration, and composition. Concepts of originality and authorship, more concretely defined in the past, have become blurred (Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2007). Popular online sharing sites like YouTube, Reddit, FaceBook, and TikTok, not only condone remastering and remixing from original sources, but reward those who do it well in the form of "Likes," followers, and advertising revenues. Wikipedia serves as a shining example of the remix culture where authors are invited to take part in an ongoing process of collectively preparing and revising online encyclopedia entries (Evans-Tokaryk, 2014). The resultant remixed information, while far from peer-reviewed and credible, often returns one of the first matches students see when using search engines to locate information about a given topic. Whether via Wikipedia, Reddit, Siri or Alexa, the Internet has significantly reduced the time it takes to investigate a topic.

The ever-changing nature of the Internet and technology, underscores the complexity of defining academic originality. As increasing numbers of students move to online classrooms, it is important to examine what constitutes academic integrity in a remix culture. This chapter explores the current nature and extent of academic dishonesty across the spectrum of K-12 and post-secondary education, examining repercussions of cheating; degrees of culpability and knowledge; technological influences; and strategies for addressing academic dishonesty aimed at students, educators, curriculum developers, and administrators.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Cheating often begins in the middle school years. Research suggests that more than half of middle school students have cheated on homework or an exam, and the prevalence of cheating has increased in recent years (Ma et al., 2008). Surveys administered to students from three universities found that two-thirds admitted to cheating in high school, college, or both (Bernardi et al., 2004, p. 397). More recently, the International Center for Academic Integrity (2021) reported that 95% of undergraduate and graduate students in the United States and United Kingdom had cheated in some form (para. 2), leaving only

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