

Information Literacy Part Four: Using Information Ethically and Legally

A significant part of understanding the work of the university and your own role in it is understanding how to use information ethically and legally. This section will introduce you to some terms and policies that will be important during your academic career and beyond.

Intellectual Property, Copyright, and Fair Use

Intellectual property is any product of the intellectual process, such as scholarship or creative work, and can include inventions, literary and artistic works, including books and music; and such things as symbols, names, images, and other commercial designs. Intellectual property is often protected by copyright, trademark, or patent laws.

Many, if not most creators of intellectual property want to make money from their work and do not want to give away their information for free. Therefore, creators of intellectual property are granted rights to protect their work from being used by others without their permission. One of those rights is **copyright**: the legal right of owners (creators, authors) to determine when and how their work is copied and distributed. Generally speaking, if you want to use material that someone else has created you have to secure their permission to use it. Sometimes this involves paying a royalty fee.

Although you will sometimes find copyright-protected material on the Web, most copyrighted material is not on the Web where it could be freely accessed—this is another good reason to use library resources in your research!

Before the advent of printing no one thought much about copyright because copying material involved the slow and painstaking process of copying manuscripts by hand. After the invention and wide adoption of the printing press, copies were easier to produce and copyright was a legal right devised to protect material from being copied and sold without the author's permission.

Today, when we have so many ways to copy and distribute material: photocopiers, Web sites, peer-to-peer networks, etc., copyright remains an important right of creators to control ownership of their work whether it be officially published in print form or not.

Items that can be awarded copyright protection include:

- Literary works and other printed material;
- Works of visual art, including photographs;
- Music and other sound recordings;
- Movies;
- Architectural works, models, and sculptures;
- Recorded dance or drama performances.

Things that cannot be copyrighted include:

- Improvisations and performances that have not been recorded or notated;
- Titles, names, short phrases, and symbols, some of which fall under “trademark” protection;
- Concepts, ideas, and methods;
- Works in the public domain, including standard calendars, rules of measure, etc.

Not all copying and distributing of another person’s work is illegal. **Fair Use** is a provision, governed by certain rules, that is accorded to scholarly work whereby small sections of a work can be copied and distributed for educational purposes without having to secure permission from the owner. One of the reasons professors ask that you cite your sources, including putting quotations around source material, is to ensure that you are abiding by Fair Use policies; not doing so can be a violation of copyright law, and could amount to **plagiarism**.

Copyright law is complex, and as more ways are created for copying and distributing material, the more confusing it can be for people to know when and how they can use material either in printed form or on the Internet. For more information on copyright, see the U.S. government’s copyright Website: <http://www.copyright.gov/> .

Plagiarism and Academic Fraud

As discussed in Part One, the mission of university work is to introduce undergraduates to the academic process of creating knowledge. That process relies upon an understanding of prior knowledge and the sources used to create it.

In modeling this process, students practice “the research process,” and other forms of information literacy, where information is gathered and synthesized into student projects, presentations, and research papers complete with bibliographies and Works Cited lists to indicate what research sources were used.

Plagiarism is the term used to describe a variety of activities that evade the “research process” and undermine the purpose of academic study by passing off the work of others as one’s own, either knowingly or unknowingly. Plagiarism is also the result of not citing research sources or by not citing them properly. In both cases, plagiarism involves theft and fraud. Both of these activities go against the purpose of university study; further, it is a violation of intellectual property rights and possibly of copyright law.

Plagiarism can be cause for expulsion from the university.

Academic fraud is a broader term for activities that include plagiarism and other forms of cheating, such as stealing an exam, copying the work of others, allowing someone else to copy your work, taking a course or exam for another student, or using unauthorized sources or materials during an exam or other assessment.

For more information, see the section on Academic Honesty on the University Website:
<http://www.snhu.edu/1443.asp>

Plagiarism.org: http://plagiarism.org/learning_center/what_is_plagiarism.html

Avoiding Plagiarism

The following are tips to avoid plagiarism:

- 1) Recognize that the process of researching and writing is just as important as the final product.
 Professors are just as interested to know what sources you selected and how you used them as they are in your final paper, project, or presentation. Select and use information well and cite your sources.
- 2) Understand when to cite:
 - a. When using someone else's words directly (quoting);
 - b. When paraphrasing someone else's words or ideas (this is important and is often overlooked);
 - c. When using the structure of someone else's presentation of information;
 - d. When using visual or multimedia materials created by someone else.

Err on the side of caution: it is better to cite a source than to risk plagiarism.

- 3) Use a style manual to learn proper citation formats for your bibliographies and Works Cited lists. Style manuals are available both in print and online (the online versions may not be as complete as the print versions) and give examples of how to cite materials you may use in your papers, projects, and presentations. Know what format your work is expected to be cited in (examples include Turabian, MLA, and APA, among others).
- 4) Use RefWorks to collect research citations and to format bibliographies automatically! See <http://www.snhu.edu/640.asp>.
- 5) Use Turnitin: TurnItIn.com is a Web-based resource accessible through Blackboard and available by license to SNHU faculty and students that assists in assessing papers for possible plagiarism. Students can use Turnitin to evaluate their papers for possible plagiarism before turning in their work and professors can use it to check papers for plagiarism after work has been "turned in."

Online tutorials are available on the SNHU Website that give overviews of both avoiding plagiarism and proper paraphrasing. You can find them here:
<http://www.snhu.edu/5733.asp>.

See the SNHU Student Handbook for other policies and procedures for using information while enrolled at the University: <http://www.snhu.edu/2103.asp>

Other Information Literacy Resources

The following is a list of other resources on or about Information Literacy:

T.I.L.T.: The Information Literacy Tutorial: <http://rhakotis.snhu.edu/tilt/>

Shapiro Library Research Help: Online tutorials and research guides: <http://www.snhu.edu/1949.asp>

Association of College and Research Libraries Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education
<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/standards.pdf>

This guide was created by Kathrine Aydelott, Reference Coordinator/Instruction Librarian at Southern New Hampshire University's Shapiro Library, in conjunction with other Shapiro Library Librarians.

Information found herein is based on the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (2001).

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