

Caroline Sietmann, Dominican University
LIBRAS Continuing Education funding report
ACRL e-Learning: "The Librarian's Role in Combating Student Plagiarism"
16 October 2007

This Web conference gave me the confidence and the desire to make the library an integral part of academic integrity at Dominican University. Attended by over 50 people, the conference provided an overview of the culture of copy on campuses, explained how discipline-based approaches can curb plagiarism, and gave suggestions for ways librarians can work with faculty to instruct students in proper citation methods and prevent plagiarism.

The statistics show large percentages of students are cheating or passing copied text off as their own. Although not encouraging, they are not surprising. We have been hearing the numbers for some time. What surprised me is the number of high-profile news stories regarding plagiarism in the publishing and entertainment worlds. Plagiarism is truly an issue that pervades every corner of society.

Dominican is not immune. As our campus administrator of Turnitin and as an instruction librarian, I see suspected cases of plagiarism as well as students' struggles with research methods and citing sources. I have always left the teaching of citing and citation styles to faculty. This semester, we started using RefWorks. On one hand, this perhaps makes both librarians and faculty more likely leave citation to a software program. On the other, this perhaps gives us a greater responsibility to explain why proper citation is necessary and the limits of programs like RefWorks. Since the library administers RefWorks at Dominican, we have a huge responsibility.

As suggested by the conference leader, Lynn Lampert, I will work with other librarians to learn the citation manuals and citation issues in the disciplines for which we are subject bibliographers. We teach research methods and resources in specific subjects; discipline-specific citation styles can easily become part of instruction. This is advocated in scores of articles Lampert directed us to. Furthermore, it is included in the ACRL Information Literacy Standards.

This conference raised the question: "What would you do if you suspected a student had plagiarized?" This is a sticky wicket for librarians: I am not the student's professor, but I helped the student find the resource that s/he plagiarized from. We were guided to some articles that deal with this question, and several participants shared what they would do in that situation. Honestly, I hope I'm never confronted with it. But, I would speak up about it. With faculty status, I feel Dominican librarians have a greater obligation to do so.

I especially liked the online tutorials created by other universities. These are tools that can easily be incorporated into the information literacy graduation

requirement and library instruction. Dominican is growing and changing and, in the process, re-thinking many aspects of our curriculum. Tutorials are quick and easy ways to introduce academic integrity into that re-thinking. But the library must be involved in more ways than tutorials. We must be part of the entire conversation and part of the long-term plan. I will take what I have learned through this conference to make sure that happens.