Resources for Scholarly Research and Writing as Antidote to Plagiarism

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In January of 2010, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) released a study conducted by Thomas Dee and Brian Jacobs that reported success in anti-plagiarism instruction.\(^1\) Dee and Jacobs examined the effectiveness of an anti-plagiarism tutorial among 1,200 papers and concluded that pre-assignment completion of the tutorial “reduced instances of plagiarism by roughly 2 percentage points overall (i.e., a two-thirds reduction) and that this treatment effect was concentrated among students with lower [standardized test] scores.”\(^2\) From this data, Dee & Jacob concluded “intervention reduced plagiarism by increasing student knowledge rather than by increasing the perceived probabilities of detection and punishment.”\(^3\)

In addition to the on-line tutorial suggested through the Dee and Jacobs study,\(^4\) two books have been developed to guide the emerging scholar through the process of scholarly writing.


These books set out basic parameters of scholarly writing and are complementary to the general advice that appears in the Modern Language Association’s guide for writers of research papers.\(^5\) The MLA guide is a resource that has undergone several revisions and enhancements since 1951 when it first appeared as a Style Sheet in the Journal of the MLA.\(^6\) Now in its Seventh Edition and at 292 pages, the current edition has devoted an entire chapter to plagiarism and academic integrity.\(^7\) Its treatment of the mechanics of attribution is extensive and includes sections on keeping track of sources,\(^8\) taking notes from sources,\(^9\) setting up quotations,\(^x\) and citing sources in the text.\(^xi\)

More succinctly, Rebecca Moore Howard has drafted a chapter focused on how to use information responsibly and how to take notes to avoid plagiarism.\(^xii\) In addition, two short pieces, one by Matthew Edwards and the other by Philip
Kissam, set out helpful parameters for scholarly writing in the law school setting.\textsuperscript{xiii}

When culling information from research sources, an emerging scholar must make informed decisions about how to record what has been learned. One particularly detailed plagiarism policy at the University of Missouri-Kansas City identifies options for note taking first set out in an earlier composition article.\textsuperscript{xiv} Those options are 1) an outline,\textsuperscript{xv} 2) a précis,\textsuperscript{xvi} 3) a paraphrase\textsuperscript{xvii} or 4) a direct quotation.\textsuperscript{xviii} In addition to careful notetaking, the writer must take care to provide full bibliographic source information in her notes.\textsuperscript{xix} Many times the citation to the source outlined précised, paraphrased, or quoted, should also include a reference to the source that led to the material.\textsuperscript{xix}

Resources are available for scholarly writers to develop basic vocabulary and expertise in constructing accurate sourcing for their scholarly output. The current state of the law demonstrates the critical relevance these materials have in a scholar’s library.\textsuperscript{xii}


\textsuperscript{ii} Dee & Jacob, supra note 1, at 3.

\textsuperscript{iii} Dee & Jacob, supra note 1 (abstract).

\textsuperscript{iv} The on-line tutorial that was used in the Dee & Jacob study is at the CBB Plagiarism Resource Cite, Center for Educational Technology, Middlebury College, available online at: \url{http://abacus.bates.edu/cbb/} (last visited Oct. 18, 2011).

\textsuperscript{v} For a discussion of the MLA Handbook, the CBE Manual (for scientific journals), and the APA Style Manual, see Robert J. Connors, \textit{The Rhetoric of Citation Systems Part II: Competing Epistemic Values in Citation}, 17 Rhetoric Rev. 219-245 (1999), available at: \url{http://www.jstor.org/stable/466152}.

\textsuperscript{vi} See Connors, supra note v, at 232-237 (tracing the history of the MLA handbook through the early 1990s).
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vii Modern Language Association of America, MLA Handbook for Writers of Research
Papers 51-61 (7th ed. 2009).
viii MLA, supra note vii, at 31.
ix Id. at 38-40.
x Id. at 92-105.
xii Id. at 213-232.
xiii Rebecca Moore Howard, Writing Matters: A Handbook for Writing and Research
xiv See Matthew A. Edwards, Teaching Foreign LL.M Students About U.S. Legal Scholarship, 51
xv Marjorie Fink Vargas, Developing an Immunity to Sophomoric Plagiarism: Notetaking Skills,
http://www1.law.umkc.edu/academic/plagiarism.htm (last visited Oct. 17, 2011)).
xvi Id. at 43 (use the outline form of notetaking where “the source provides an overview of
the topic or a survey of the issues, major points, or facts”).
xvii Id. at 44 (use this form of notetaking where the source includes extraneous
“description, narration, or background facts” to set up “a restatement of the main points
in the reporter’s words insofar as possible”).
xviii Id. Vargas suggests a paraphrase is appropriate where “the ideas in the source are
highly complex or are embodied in poetic, technical, or archaic language. The function
of the paraphrase is to “translate,” to explain. Id. The paraphrase is “frequently longer
than the original selection, but the ideas are stated in simpler, more familiar language.”
Id. Vargas suggests writers should craft the paraphrase at the original reading of the
source.
xix Id. Vargas counsels use of the direct quotation where “the source presents a singular
opinion or a unique point of view . . . which is not only clear but well written”.
xii Id.
xiii See e.g. the citation at supra note xiv (acknowledging the Vargas article was uncovered
through a study of the plagiarism policy at the University of Missouri at Kansas City law
school).
xiv See e.g. Kathryn A. Sampson, Plagiarism’s Back Story, 18 J. Leg. Writing ___ (2012) (available in
http://www.law2.byu.edu/law_library/lwri/archive.htm); Audrey Wolfson Latourette, Plagiarism:
Legal and Ethical Implications for the University, 37 J.C. & U.L. 1 (2010); James Mawdsley, Plagiarism,