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EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE REVIEW

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This review examines one educational resource from four different angles. Generically, the resource is “electronic text matching tools” and more specifically, the most frequently used tool, Turnitin.

The first review is from Gill Rowell who successfully dispels the myth that Turnitin is “plagiarism detection software”. Gill charts the history of Turnitin and clarifies the contribution that Turnitin can and cannot make to the detection and prevention of plagiarism.

This sets the scene for Jude Carroll's review. I would not be exaggerating if I said that Jude is one of the world's leading experts on plagiarism. She offers a careful and measured overview of the benefits (and pitfalls) and the role of electronic detection in (her) holistic institutional approach to plagiarism.

Erica Morris is a senior advisor at the HE Academy and is part of the JISC Academic Integrity Service. She offers her views on electronic detection and recommends other useful resources which can help students develop skills in good academic practice.

Finally, Stephanie Jameson who has used Turnitin in her Faculty for the past three years, shares some examples where Turnitin has helped with the prevention and detection of plagiarism and one example where it has not!

TurnitinUK: Plagiarism detection software?

Gill Rowell (gill.rowell@plagiarismadvice.org)

Gill Rowell is an Academic Advisor with PlagiarismAdvice.org, formerly the JISC-funded Plagiarism Advisory Service, and provides pedagogic support and training to institutions, teachers and students on strategies for ensuring assessed work is original. She has BA(Hons) in English Studies and an MA in Information and Library Management, and as a former librarian, Gill is particularly interested in assisting students to develop effective information handling skills to enable them to make considered and ethical use of electronic resources.

To call TurnitinUK “plagiarism detection software” is perhaps somewhat misleading, as we shall explore in this short review. Rather it is more realistic to refer to it as a text-matching tool which identifies similar text in students' submitted work with material from internet sources, other UK students' work and a range of commercial texts and electronic journals widely used in educational institutions. The software itself is currently used by around 97% of UK universities, increasing numbers of further education colleges and schools, plus all the unitary awarding bodies for GCSE and A-Level qualifications as part of their malpractice investigations.

TurnitinUK was selected by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) as part of a national strategy to discourage plagiarism in HE and FE institutions, and following a technical review of tools available in this area in 2001 (Bull et al.). Following a six-month pilot of the software with a range of institutions in various subject disciplines the service was launched in

2002 as part of a holistic approach to plagiarism prevention via the JISC-funded Plagiarism Advisory Service (successor to PlagiarismAdvice.org). The software was initially provided at no cost to HE and FE institutions in order to encourage adoption, however, the service is now paid for by institutions via a subsidised licence. The software was re-endorsed as JISC's preferred solution by an independent review in 2007 (Scaife).

Capabilities and use

TurnitinUK, at its most basic can identify the heritage of a piece of student work, whether sources have been cited or not, and where the document demonstrates either small fragments of matching text, large paragraphs, or what is referred to "patchwriting" where various sources of text have effectively been sewn together, with little student input or critique. However whether any of these practices amount to plagiarism is not something a blunt tool such as TurnitinUK, is able to determine, and this decision is subject to institutional guidelines and the judgment of the tutor viewing the resulting "Originality Report". What the software arguably does offer, however, is a valuable learning experience for students on the origin of textual material and the need for attribution of electronic sources.

The obvious assumption is to view TurnitinUK in the first instance as a summative tool, and refer to it in suitably punitive language for "catching" and "policing" cheating students. Certainly this model of use has definite merit, after all, this was JISC's thinking back in 2001, and certainly the software can and does, contribute to an institution's plagiarism prevention strategy. It is a pedagogic tool to assist tutors with the decision-making process when determining whether plagiarism has occurred, and used with all students within a class or module ensures all are treated equitably, and that any assumption of guilt is founded on definite proof, and as such many institutions use the Originality Report as case processing evidence.

Key to the debate surrounding plagiarism and authenticity is the development of student study skills, information literacy and appropriate use of electronic sources of information, and therefore a formative approach to using TurnitinUK is also widely encouraged, and is arguably highly effective, as is evidenced by this user's comment:

"most of the staff who are using Turnitin on a regular basis seem to see it as a useful tool for teaching students about plagiarism, rather than a method of "catching them at it"... The practice is for the students to submit a formative assignment and the tutor to discuss the implications of a high scoring match with the student concerned should this occur." (Beckton, 2007)

Not only does the Originality Report, reinforce the need for appropriate referencing and citation, it also graphically demonstrates the origin of words and ideas, and where material, especially from essay bank sites has been duplicated in several different locations on the web. In demonstrating the provenance of words and ideas on the web, this not only opens a discourse with students as to the originality of their work, but also allows for a consideration of whether the sources used are of the appropriate level and quality for the work in hand and also demonstrates any overreliance on particular sources.

Arguments as to what TurnitinUK cannot do are well-rehearsed, and tend to focus on misconceptions of the capabilities of the software, a factor highlighted in the initial pilot projects back in 2000, and equally valid today, almost ten years later:

"technology can only assist us, it will never replace the expertise of humans and that the answer to problems usually lies in the process and procedures not technology alone." (JISC, 2000)

The need for a holistic approach to plagiarism prevention was acknowledged in the creation of a supporting advisory service to accompany use of TurnitinUK, in order to provide guidance on implementation of the tool and integration with existing assessment and institutional policies and procedures. In spite of this caveat some institutions undoubtedly have viewed the software as a neatly packaged solution to all their plagiarism concerns. The

service has been keen from its inception to promote a coordinated approach to plagiarism prevention and the need for academic judgment to be valued above technological ability.

The Originality Report should never be the sole indicator of student plagiarism, and any case referred to a malpractice committee must be reinforced by supporting evidence from other sources. Equally ad hoc use of the software is discouraged, and increasing numbers of institutions are now developing specific guidance on use of TurnitinUK as part of their academic misconduct policies. Clear and transparent policies and guidelines on how and when TurnitinUK will be used and in what context results will be interpreted is vital to ensure the confidence and trust of students in the assessment process is maintained. Similarly, a realistic awareness of the capabilities of the software should be communicated to both staff and students, and careful guidance on interpreting the Originality Report for staff is vital so as to prevent an erroneous judgment being made. Institutions are therefore strongly encouraged to provide training to all academic staff in this area.

In terms of realistic awareness of the capabilities of TurnitinUK it is important to remember that whilst the capacity of the web database is considerable, such is the rate of growth of the web, it is unrealistic to think that TurnitinUK is able to exactly replicate this.

Upgrades and new features 2009

Firstly, a need for the software to more closely align with UK institutional assessment and quality assurance procedures has often been reported, and following a proposal from users, a feature to facilitate anonymous marking of students' work via the system was implemented in Spring 2009. This feature effectively hides student identifiers from the assignment inbox view and the Originality Report itself until a date defined by the marker is reached. Revealing student names prior to this date is possible, however a explanation must also be recorded by the marker, ensuring an audit trail exists for institutional quality assurance standards.

Recent upgrades to the software in Summer 2009 have seen several significant changes to the Originality Report resulting in increased flexibility of interpretation of results. A breakdown of the overall similarity index, means that users are now able to see at a glance the proportion of matching text identified from either the internet, other students' work within the database or from commercial publications. Tutors also now have the ability to exclude small matches from the Originality Report. This can either be done by specifying a threshold of number of consecutive words to be excluded or a percentage figure (for examples matches of 1% or less). A further feature aimed at allowing further modification of the report is the ability to exclude quoted material or a bibliography on an assignment basis, a feature which has previously only been possible on a report by report basis. Whilst such expanded usability features are welcomed, they perhaps more strongly serve to reinforce the need for considered analysis of the report itself prior to making any judgment as to whether plagiarism has occurred.

Six additional languages for the Turnitin interface have also been added, including Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Thai, in addition to the main European languages. This provides increased opportunities for use of the software by franchised courses overseas and by distance learning students.

Additionally, recent expansion of the search capacity of the TurnitinUK database means that the system now comprises an extensive collection of published material. Most significantly via the "CrossCheck" initiative with aggregator CrossRef which aims to provide a mechanism to enable member publishers, including the BMJ, Cambridge University Press, Elsevier, Nature, Oxford University Press, Springer, Taylor & Francis and Wiley Blackwell to verify that content submitted by contributing authors is original. In return, content from these scholarly electronic journals is added to the Turnitin database for the purpose of checking students' submitted work. Further details on this project can be found at:

<http://www.crossref.org/crosscheck.html>

This initiative compliments the existing content provision which includes electronic journal material from ABC-CLIO, Emerald, Gale General OneFile, SAGE Reference and PubMed.

Further expansion of the database in the coming months will see additional content added from EBSCO, Wiley, McGraw-Hill and Pearson.

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Should we use Turnitin at this university?

Jude Carroll (jrcarroll@brookes.ac.uk)

Jude Carroll is a Principal Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University. Since 2001, she has worked nationally and internationally on issues linked to student plagiarism. She is the author of The Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education (2nd edition, 2007) and has served on the Advisory Board of the UK Plagiarism Advisory Service, 2002/8.

Over the last ten years, I have often been asked this, with or without a brand name such as Turnitin included in the question. Just as the BBC must say “other guides are available” when it puffs the Radio Times, I start by making sure people know that other software tools are available. Several have track records of use in the UK and in other countries. In addition, Third World researchers, such as the Sri Lankan postgraduate student I met in June 2009, are developing local versions as freeware to try and deal with issues of cost and, in his case, as the centrepiece for a proposed national approach to dealing with plagiarism. All this activity shows the commercial and research value of text-matching software as a “solution” to plagiarism. But what might its pedagogic value be?

The value of “plagiarism detectors”

Discussions of text-matching usually involve people making that two fingers signal for “...” around words like “solution” and “detection”. In fact, text-matching tools cannot “solve” the plagiarism problem and certainly cannot do so in isolation. Many studies show this and a few are listed at the end of this paper. In addition, even a brief digital search will turn up blogs and on line discussions which address the consequences of using any plagiarism tool in isolation (e.g., <http://www.dontturnitin.com/linksinfo.html>; <http://www.plagiarismtoday.com/>; http://blogs.usask.ca/integrity/2008/09/plagiarism_beyo.html). Instead, along with the other authors writing in this section, I suggest an integrated approach to dealing with plagiarism (Macdonald & Carroll, 2006). An institution, department or even teacher who does otherwise risks students becoming disaffected or assuming you have more interest in detecting any cheating than in accrediting learning. Students who feel this way might invest energies in evasion rather than more valued things such as learning to credit others' work. Above all, used alone, text-matching tools like Turnitin do not work well enough to balance their negative aspects and limitations, some of which I explore below.

Limits and strengths

Getting people to look at the real capability of such tools can be tough. I regularly meet teachers and students who imagine anti-plagiarism software is like sniffer dogs in an airport, sussing out where students have breached the rules no matter how well hidden. Users' managers can be equally unrealistic and conclude that buying a software licence will absolve them from supporting any further actions to deal with plagiarism. In reality, tools simply digitalise the students' text then search databases and identify examples where digital strings

of code seem to match. Any text-matching tool's capability is a reflection of how good the databases are, how clever the algorithms-setters have been at sifting out matches, and how clearly the results are presented. The tools cannot ferret out close paraphrases in obscure Library books or follow up hunches, no matter how much teachers wish they could. When this reality dawns on novice users and/or their managers, they can swing to the conclusion that they are useless. I would argue that something need not be a Magic Bullet to nevertheless have a role. I see text-matching tools as a useful additional resource in the overall management of plagiarism.

Notice that so far, I have not referred to tools as plagiarism detectors, unlike many of those who market and promote their use. Detecting plagiarism is an academic judgement based on a range of facts and factors and only people can do that. Software tools, on the other hand, chop a students' text into digital segments then go looking for similar digital strings. Most tools check the Web, plus they check previously submitted work, and a selective digitalised collection of texts. Most generate a report of findings which a person then interprets, deciding on the significance of the findings. Interpretation can be tricky. Teachers cannot rely on the overall percentage summary since a 40% match, for example, can mean very different things. Is it one chunk of text? Or an accumulative total based on many small snippets? Is it 40% copied in the methodology section or 40% in the discussion? Are all the matching sections correctly annotated and cited to show the source? People who check reports say it quickly becomes a matter of "scan and move on", often requiring only seconds - though in a large class even these small amounts add up. Again, as with expectations, the reality is that any tool takes time and again, this can mean real disappointment to hard pressed markers wanting pain-fee solutions.

At best, text-matching tools augment the skills of experienced teachers/markers who are alert to the many and varied signals that could mean the work which they are marking is not the student's own. (Where teachers are unaware of such clues, then a bit of training can help to open their eyes.) For example, a short paper with a four page bibliography would not worry a text-matching algorithm but a teacher knows it is more likely to show the student's skills in harvesting others' bibliographies than in personal research – but that assumption needs checking, too. Elsewhere in this section, you will find a detailed discussion of what one tool, Turnitin, can and cannot do. These limitations extend to other tools, too. No tool can cope with diagrams or images; they cannot reach text which is held behind firewalls or on protected databases. Tools cannot identify copy that has been translated, cannot identify examples where students have commissioned others to write the work, and many have a language-specific bias. Though the number of journals and textbooks which do allow their text to be used is growing, most databases hold a small or even tiny proportion of the sources which students might use. My conclusion, with apologies for all the double negatives, is that not finding matching text does not mean it is not plagiarised. The sad thing is that teachers can begin to doubt their own findings when a section of student work seems unlikely to be that of the student yet comes up "clean" on a report. Again, here is a case for good information and training.

Some recommendations for getting the most out of text matching

Those who advocate the use of such tools – and I include myself in this category – suggest starting with reasonable expectations and then ensuring that everyone who uses these tools has the expertise needed to do so efficiently and fairly. Using the tools needs to be part of a holistic, integrated approach where students are taught the skills they need to do their assignments and where assignments themselves are carefully designed to encourage making rather than finding answers. Students need to know and believe that systems are in place to deal with plagiarism quickly and fairly and they need to be introduced to the positive values and expectations as to how they should use and accredit others' work. I also think they are too useful to just use them for summative assessment.

Many teachers now use text-matching formatively, as an additional way to alert students to the need to learn and adopt appropriate academic writing practices. Those who do so say a

test run through Turnitin is no substitute for all the careful teaching and feedback which is needed to develop such skills. Nevertheless, for many students, seeing their own digital report is often the moment when all the talk about using sources comes clear: “Ah, you mean I need to do this... You mean me”. (Note: Teachers need to make sure they talk through what the report shows/ does not show with students lest the students draw the mistaken conclusion that their job is to reduce the matching percentage to zero.) Often, suggesting formative use triggers strong reactions about “teaching them to cheat” or threatening later detection strategies. The latter objection is easily addressed by explaining how formative use is managed and any provider can help with this if users are not already clued up. The former objection on “teaching to cheat” is more difficult. I have often noted objectors’ metaphors of weapons, arsenals and defeat and reminded myself (and sometimes, them) that no matter how frustrating or indeed, enraging it is to find deliberate cheating, our students are not our enemies. Our first responsibility is to teach them how to do it right – then to protect the integrity of our awards when they do not.

Finally, how such tools are managed makes a difference to the experience of teachers and students. Good information, skilled support and trouble-shooting, effective recordkeeping and monitoring and above all, a clearly publicised holistic policy can mean that these tools form an effective additional resource in the overall plagiarism management strategy. We are lucky in the UK to have established user groups (for Turnitin, try www.jiscpas.ac.uk and follow the links). We have research studies that can continue to support and guide us in the use of text-matching tools; recent additions can be found on the iPAS website (<http://www.jiscpas.ac.uk>) or have a look at the list of resources in this site: <http://ahe.cqu.edu.au/plagiarism.htm>

When asked “should we buy a license?” I always say “probably, yes” and then, if I am lucky, we start discussing many of the points made above. These days, most institutions outside of the developing world where cost continues to be a deciding factor, will make the choice to go ahead. In many cases, it is an informed choice to do so.

Some articles about plagiarism policy and plagiarism detection

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A perspective from the Academy JISC Academic Integrity Service

Erica Morris (erica.morris@heacademy.ac.uk)

Erica Morris is a Senior Adviser for the Academy JISC Academic Integrity Service and is based at the HLST Academy Network. She has a BA and MSc from the University of Sussex, and a PhD in Educational Technology. She previously worked at the Open University where she managed projects that involved the development of resources for students and teaching staff. She has published papers in the areas of student learning, statistical education and learning technologies.

To address the complex problem of student plagiarism in higher education institutions, it is recognised that a “holistic institutional approach” should be adopted, which emphasises the need for explicit policies and procedures, and focuses on improving assessment methods and ensuring that students have opportunities to develop their learning skills (Macdonald and Carroll, 2006, p233). Sutherland-Smith (2008) has also highlighted students' difficulties that are associated in undertaking university-level study, which include the following: students can struggle with managing their time, have under-developed writing skills, and are inexperienced in citation and referencing. Indeed, these are difficulties that if not addressed may contribute to the possibility that a student could plagiarise material.

Accordingly, over recent years a variety of teaching and staff development resources have been produced, providing guidance in re-thinking and re-designing assessment strategies and tasks in ways that might help to minimise the likelihood of student plagiarism. The following resources have been selected to highlight valuable practice in this area:

- The JISC and the Higher Education Academy have recently produced a short resources guide on using technology to support assessment. This guide includes links to case studies and sign posts information and guidance on e-assessment. <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/Home/publications/documents/jisceassessmentresources.aspx>
- “Managing Assessment: Student and Staff Perspectives” (MESA) was developed as a hands-on tool for a range of staff including managers, teaching staff and educational developers. Interestingly, both students and staff were involved in the creation of the resource, which can be used in a number of ways to raise awareness and encourage discussion about key assessment issues: the 10 case studies can be used on an individual basis, or in a workshop setting with staff and students. A case study relating to plagiarism is provided with supporting contextual information that is designed to encourage a consideration of the issues that might be faced by a student and at the institutional level. http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/tla/a_MESA.pdf
- The “Assessing learning in Australian universities” website has practical guides (e.g., on assessing large classes, minimising plagiarism, assessing group work); advice for new teaching staff; and a comprehensive booklet on “Ideas, strategies and resources for quality in student assessment” including strategies to help deter plagiarism. <http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning/index.html>

Institutions are working to ensure that students have the opportunities to develop a range of skills, including research and academic writing skills. Typically, student portals or learning environments are set up so that students can access online tutorials designed to help them develop skills in academic practice. These tutorials may be generic – to be used by students in the early stages of their degree – or might have been tailored for particular subject areas. Baughan et al. (2008) report on an institutional initiative, which involved introducing an online course for students that covered managing information, referencing and plagiarism. They describe the positive aspects of this: the material could be accessed at times that suited the student and could be tailored to particular discipline areas. It was found that students indicated that they valued an educational resource that included subject-specific content, such as the conventions used in their discipline (Baughan et al, 2008).

There is often concern that students might not engage with material covered in a generic tutorial designed to help them learn about good academic practice, as the resource may be perceived as not relevant to their particular needs. Intuitively, it is much more meaningful for a student to learn about the citation conventions used within a subject, and examples of academic writing used to illustrate poor paraphrasing from say, history will make little sense to a student taking sports science. On the other hand, it must be recognised that the student body is diverse and different kinds of opportunities and resources to help students acquire and practice their skills are needed along with receiving timely and meaningful feedback: some students may find it helpful to tap into a generic resource that could improve their

information literacy skills, for example. The following are a selected sample of the kinds of resources that are available to help students develop their skills relating to good academic practice:

- The University of Southampton have developed “Prepare for Success”, which is a web-based learning resource targeted at international students. The resource is structured as learning objects, or activity-based learning units that focus on particular topics, covering a wide range of areas including academic writing, critical thinking, time management and working with others.
<http://www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/index.html>
- “The Virtual Training Suite” is a series of online tutorials designed to help students develop their internet research skills. They are available for different subject areas including Hospitality and catering; Leisure, sport and recreation; and Travel and tourism. The tutorials give students the opportunity to take a learning path where they can “tour “ relevant websites; “discover “ how to carry out effective searching and use different search tools; and “judge” internet sources so that they can be evaluated for educational purposes. <http://www.vts.intute.ac.uk/>
- Canterbury Christ Church University’s “Graduate Skills” provides an extensive series of study skills units including ones covering academic honesty, referencing and plagiarism. The units or learning objects include quizzes, are organised as “basic”, “intermediate” and “advanced” resources for students at different levels of study, and can be rated and commented on by learners.
<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/graduate-skills/>

The Academy JISC Academic Integrity Service has been set up to help promote a holistic approach to academic misconduct in higher education, which considers both the pedagogical and management responses needed to address issues, such as plagiarism and collusion. We are working to improve the support provision for academic integrity in higher education by providing a more coherent picture of support resources in this area.

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Turnitin: An academic’s perspective

Stephanie Jameson (s.jameson@leedsmet.ac.uk)

Stephanie Jameson is a Principal Lecturer in the Leslie Silver International Faculty at Leeds Metropolitan University. For the past three years she has been responsible for the management of academic integrity in the Faculty.

Introduction

I am a Principal Lecturer for Academic Integrity in the Leslie Silver International Faculty at Leeds Metropolitan University. This role arose as a direct result of a visit from Jude Carroll to the University in 2006. Our Pro-Vice Chancellor for Assessment Learning and Teaching, Professor Sally Brown had invited Jude to the University to deliver a series of workshops to staff and to examine the University’s approach to plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.

Jude wrote a report for academic board and made several recommendations. One of these recommendations was to introduce “Academic Conduct Officers”. Academic Conduct Officers have been introduced successfully in many Universities recently and their main purpose is to ensure consistency and fairness to students. Basically, one person (or sometimes several people) is responsible for dealing with plagiarism and academic misconduct in a department, school or faculty. The academic conduct officer normally supports the academic who suspects that plagiarism or academic misconduct has occurred. The ACO may chair the interview, deal with the paperwork and may support academics in helping not only to detect plagiarism but to attempt to prevent it happening in the first place. ACOs can help academic staff to attempt to design plagiarism out of assessments and can help students to understand why it is important to attribute work to the original author.

I have been responsible for academic integrity in our Faculty for the past three years and I have seen the use of Turnitin, both by staff and students, grow quite dramatically over this period of time. The following are some examples of where we have found the use of Turnitin invaluable in the prevention and detection of plagiarism.

Prevention

All of our modules are linked to the University VLE and most of our modules are linked to Turnitin. For students, this means that all written work in a module has to go through Turnitin before it can be submitted for marking. This is for two main reasons. One, it enables a student to check if their work “matches” work on the Turnitin database, and then they can clearly see this and can rectify this if necessary. Two, it is an attempt to be transparent to students so that we are not trying “to catch them out – behind their back”. They can see the Turnitin text match before we do and they have an opportunity to put this right if necessary. Most students welcome this transparency and have learned more about academic writing from this exercise. However, there is a danger that some students will misunderstand this and will, as Jude says “attempt to get the match down to zero”. If this happens, then more support is needed to help students understand what correct referencing is really about.

I would now like to share two examples where Turnitin helped academic staff enormously and one example where it could not help at all.

An essay

A Masters student recently submitted an essay where there was a text match of 99%. The most significant match was a 95% match to one source. The tutor who read the Turnitin originality report did not even need to spend time reading the student’s work. It was clear from the originality report that 95% of the “student’s work” had been directly copied from one journal article. The originality report identified the article. It did not take the tutor very long to read the originality report and the report gave the tutor the confidence to initiate an investigation. The student was invited for interview. Our procedures ensure that the student is sent the Turnitin originality report prior to the interview (even though it is already on the VLE). So when the student was asked to comment on the originality report and the very high match he agreed that it was not his own work and he had simply “cut and pasted” an entire article and had then submitted it as his own work.

In the “olden days” before text matching tools such as Turnitin were available, the tutor may not have “spotted” that this was not the student’s own work. Even if the tutor had misgivings about the work, they would then have had to find some evidence to strengthen the case. This often meant, in the words of Jude Carroll, “Googling in the Bodleian Library all weekend”. Often tutors would not take cases forward because they felt that they did not have the time or the evidence or the confidence or even a mixture of all three. Although as Gill Rowell says, an originality report should not be used as evidence in isolation and Turnitin does not detect plagiarism, in cases such as the above, the originality report is a very good place to start to investigate a case.

A dissertation

We have started to “feed-in” dissertations from previous years, then when current dissertations are submitted they can “match” or not. The first year we did this, a tutor found a dissertation with a 45% text match to a dissertation which had been submitted 3 years before. The current student had simply copied 45% of the other student’s dissertation which had been marked by another tutor three years before. There is simply no way that two different tutors marking the same text would realise that 45% of it was identical. It is probably the case that the same tutor marking the same work three years later would not remember that the words were the same.

(This technique can also work when different tutors are marking the same assignment within one module but they are all marking different students’ work. Turnitin can text-match across different students’ work and can show where text is identical. This can alert tutors to cases of potential collusion.)

Ghost Writing

Ghost Writing (where a student pays a “professional” to write a customised piece of academic work) is on the increase. Turnitin matches text and as the Ghost Writer customised the work to the question which has been set, there is no text to match. As a text-matching tool, Turnitin cannot help to detect ghost writing.

In summary, as an academic, I totally agree with Jude Carroll, that text-matching tools are a useful additional resource in the overall management of plagiarism. I also agree that detecting plagiarism is an academic judgment – and only people can do that.

Postscript

We did have one student recently who paid a ghost writer £90 to write an essay. The ghost writer plagiarised an article which came up as a very high match on Turnitin. As we said to the student: He has cheated by paying a ghost writer, and the ghost writer has cheated on him by plagiarising!

The Fourth International Plagiarism Conference

The Fourth International Plagiarism Conference will take place 21-23 June 2010 at Northumbria University’s award-winning City Campus East campus in the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne.

This conference, hosted by plagiarismadvice.org, draws together delegates from the international educational community. There is expected to be a wide variety of delegates attending the conference, ranging from teachers and tutors, to those who support students at all stages of the academic process, along with representatives from accreditation and regulatory bodies.

Currently confirmed keynote speakers are key figures in the global academic integrity community, including Jude Carroll, Deputy Director of the ASKe CETL at Oxford Brookes University, UK, Dr Teresa Fishman, Director of the Center for Academic Integrity, US and Adrian Slater, Head of Legal Services, University of Leeds, UK.

For further details on this conference, as well as abstracts, papers and presentations from the previous three conferences, visit the website:

<http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/conference.html>