

Unit I

Ethical Guidelines and the Proper Use of Source Materials

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In this Module, we shall discuss ethical standards/guidelines and the importance of originality and copyright. We shall also discuss about plagiarism and illustrate the dishonest and the proper use of source materials.

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of the Chapter, you should be able to:

1. Identify the different ethical guidelines
2. Discuss the importance of originality and copyright
3. Define plagiarism
4. Illustrate the dishonest and proper use of source materials.

A. ETHICAL GUIDELINES

One may ask, what is ethics?

According to the Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (10th ed), ethics is the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligations.

Thus, defining ethical standards had been challenging for professional organizations since everyone who participates in the discussion may offer a different perspective, and many viewpoints may be legitimate.

Let us then take a look at what Anderson-Hancock (1995) of the Society for Technical Communication in the US suggests as possible guidelines for professional excellence and ethical behavior:

- Use precise language and visuals.
- Use simple words and sentences.
- Satisfy the audience's need for information, not your own need for self-expression.
- Take responsibility for your content, remembering that real people will follow your instructions or make decisions based on your text.
- Respect your colleagues' confidentiality, be courteous, and abide by copyright laws.
- Promote professionalism and good judgment.

B. STRATEGIES FOR MAKING ETHICAL DECISIONS

What writing strategies may be tried when confronted with ethical challenges? Let us consider the following:

2. **Define the problem.** Is the dilemma legal, practical, ethical, or a combination of all three?
3. **Determine your audience.** Who will be affected by the problem? Clients, Coworkers, Management? What is their involvement, what are their individual needs, and what is your responsibility—either to the company or to the community?
4. **Maximize values; minimize problems.** Ethical dilemmas always involve options. Your challenge is to select the option that promotes the greatest worth for all stakeholders involved. You won't be able to avoid all problems. The best you can hope for is to minimize those problems for both your company and your readers while you maximize the benefits for the same stakeholders.
5. **Consider the big picture.** Don't just focus on short-term benefits when making your ethical decisions. Don't just consider how much money the company will make now, how easy the text will be to write now. Focus on long-term consequences as well. Will what you write please your readers so that they will be clients for years to come? Will what you write have a long-term positive impact on the economy or the environment?
6. **Write your text.** Implement the decision by writing your memo, letter, proposal, manual, or report.

C. IMPORTANCE OF ORIGINALITY

In any kind of publishing, various legal and ethical principles must be considered.

What are the principal areas of concern then?

The principal areas of concern, which are often related, involve originality and ownership (copyright). To avoid charges of plagiarism (claiming another person's work as your own) or copyright infringement, certain types of permission are mandatory if someone else's work, or sometimes even your own, is to be republished.

In science publishing, the ethical side of the question is even more pronounced, because originality in science has a deeper meaning than it does in other fields. A short story, for example, can be reprinted many times without violating ethical principles. **A primary research paper, however, can be published in a primary journal only once.** Dual publication can be legal if the appropriate copyright release has been obtained but is universally considered to be a cardinal sin against the ethics of science. Repetitive publication of the same data or ideas for different journals, foreign or national, reflects scientific sterility and constructive exploitation of what is considered an ethical medium for propagating one's self.

Every primary research journal requires originality, the requirement being usually stated in the journal masthead statement or in the "Instructions to Authors." Typically, such statements read as follows.

"Submission of a paper (other than a review) to a journal normally implies that it presents the results of original research or some new ideas not previously published, that is not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and that, if accepted, it will not be published elsewhere in the same form, either in English or in any other language, without the consent of the editors" ("General Notes on the Preparation of Scientific Papers," The Royal Society, London)

D. COPYRIGHT CONSIDERATIONS

The legal reasons relate to copyright law. If a journal is copyrighted, and almost all of them are, legal ownership of the published papers becomes vested in the copyright holder. Thus, if you wish to republish copyrighted material, you must obtain approval of the copyright holder or risk suit for infringement.

Publishers acquire copyright so that they will have legal basis, acting in their own interests and on behalf of all authors whose work is contained in the journals, for preventing unauthorized use of such published work. Thus, the publishing company and its author are protected against plagiarism, misappropriation of published data, unauthorized reprinting for advertising and other purposes, and other potential misuse.

Day (1979) reported that most publishers now require that each author contributing to a journal assign copyright to the publisher, either at the same time the manuscript is submitted or at the time that it is accepted for publication. To effect this assignment, the publisher provides each submitting author with a document usually titled "Copyright transfer Agreement."

Another feature of the new Copyright Act that is of interest to authors deals with photocopying. On the one hand, authors wish to see their papers receive wide distribution. On the other hand, they do not (we hope) want this to take place at the expense of the journals. Thus, the new law reflects these conflicting interests as "fair use" certain kinds of library and educational copying (that is, copying that may be done without permission and without payment of royalties) while at the same time protecting the publisher against unauthorized systematic copying.

Because both scientific ethics and copyright law are of fundamental importance, every scientist must be accurately sensitive to them. Basically, this means that you must not republish tables, figures, and substantial portions of text *unless* you have acquired permission from the owner of the copyright. Even then, it is important that you label such reprinted materials, usually with a credit line reading "Reprinted with permission from (journal or book reference); copyright (year) by (owner of copyright)."

Of the two (ethics and copyright law), ethics is more important. Even in flagrant cases of copyright infringement, it might be difficult to prove "damages,"; thus, the threat of a lawsuit is more apparent than real. However, when you do not give proper credit to sources, even brief parentheses of someone else's work can be a violation of the ethics of your profession. Such breaches of ethics, even if unintentional, may adversely affect your standing among your peers.

Simply put, it is the responsibility of every scientist to maintain the integrity of scientific publication.

E. PLAGIARISM DEFINED

Martin and Ohmann (n.d.) reported that the academic counterpart of the bank embezzler and of the manufacturer who mislabels his product is the plagiarist, or the student or scholar who leads his reader to believe that what he is reading is the original work of the writer when it is not. If it could be assumed that the distinction between plagiarism and honest use of sources is perfectly clear in everyone's mind, there would be no need for a discussion about it.

However, sometimes people are not just aware of the illegitimacy of certain kinds of "borrowing" and of the procedures for correct identification of materials other than those gained through independent research and reflection.

Therefore, let us consider the following cases:

- Word- for- word copying of another's writing without enclosing the copied passage in quotation marks and identifying it in a footnote., *both* of which are necessary. (This includes, of course, the copying of all part or any part of another student's paper)

- Casual slipping in of a particularly apt term which one has come across in readings and which so admirably expresses one's opinion that one is tempted to make it personal property
- Patching together of random jottings made in the course of reading, generally without careful identification of their source and then woven into the text, so that the result is a mosaic of other people's ideas and words, the writer's sole contribution being the cement to hold the pieces together
- Paraphrase, an abbreviated (and often skillfully prepared) restatement of someone's else's analysis or conclusion, without acknowledging that another person's text has been the basis for the recapitulation.

The examples given by Mark and Ohmann (n.d.) should make clear the dishonest and proper use of source material.

Examples of Dishonest and Improper Use of Source Materials

"The importance of the Second Treatise of Government printed in this volume is such that without it we should miss some of the familiar features of our own government. It is safe to assert that the much criticized branch known as the Supreme Court obtained its being as a result of Locke's insistence upon the separation of powers; and that the combination of many powers in the hands of the executive under the New Deal has still to encounter opposition because it is contrary to the principles enunciated therein, the effect of which is not spent, though the relationship may not be consciously traced. Again we see the crystallizing force of Locke's writing. It renders explicit and adapts to the British politics of his day the trend and the aim of writers from Languet and Bodin through Hooker and Grotius, to say nothing of the distant ancients., Aristotle and the Stoic school of natural law. It sums up magistrally the arguments used through the ages to attack authority vested in a single individual, but it does so from the particular point of view engendered by the Revolution of 1688 and is in harmony with the British scene and mental climate of the growing bourgeoisie of that age. Montesquieu and Rosseau, the framers of our own Declaration of Independence, and the statesmen (or should we say merchants and speculators?) who drew up the Constitution have re- echoed its claims for human liberty, for the separation of powers, for the sanctity of private property. In the hands of these it has been the quarry of liberal doctrines; and that it has served the socialist theory of property based on labor is final proof of its breadth of view." (From Charles L. Sherma, "Introduction" to John Locke, Treatise of Civil Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration)

(1) Word- for word Plagiarizing

It is not hard to see the importance of the *Second Treatise of Government* to our own democracy. Without it we should miss some of the familiar features of our own government. It is safe to assert that the much criticized branch known as the Supreme Court obtained its being as a result of Locke's insistence upon the separation of powers; and that the combination of many powers in the hands of the executive under the New Deal has still to encounter opposition because it is contrary to the principles enunciated therein, the effect of which is not spent, though the relationship may not be consciously traced. The framers of our own Declaration of Independence, and the statesmen who drew up the Constitution have re- echoed its claims for human liberty, for the separation of powers, for the sanctity of private property. All these are marks of the influence of Locke's *Second Treatise* on our own way of life.

In this example, after comprising half of the a first sentence, the writer copies exactly what is in the original text, leaving out the center section of the paragraph and omitting the names of Montesquieu and Rosseau where he takes up the text again. The last sentence is also the writer's own.

If the writer had enclosed all the copied text in the quotation marks and had identified the source in a footnote, he would not have been liable to the charge of plagiarism; a reader must justifiably have felt, however, that the writer's personal contribution to the discussion was not very significant.

(2) The Mosaic

The crystallizing force of Locke's writing may be seen in the effect his *second Treatise of Government* had in shaping some of the familiar features of our own government. That much criticized branch known as the Supreme Court and the combination of many powers in the hands of the excutive under the New Deal are modern examples. But even the foundations of our state- the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution- have re- echoed its claims for human liberty, for the separation of powers' for the sanctity of private property. True, the influence of others is also marked in our Constitution- from the trend and aim of writers like Languet and Bodin, Hooker and Grotius, to say nothing of Aristotle and Stoic school of natural law; but the fundamental influence is Locke's *Treatise*, the very quarry of liberal doctrines.

Note how the following phrases have been lifted out the original text and moved into new patterns:

crystallizing force of Locke's writing
some of the familiar features of our own government
much criticized branch known as the Supreme Court
combination of many powers in the hands of the excutive under the New Deal
have re- echoed its claims for human liberty, for the separation of powers' for the sanctity of private property
from the trend and aim of writers like Languet and Bodin, Hooker and Grotius, to say nothing of Aristotle and Stoic school of natural law
quarry of liberal doctrines

As in the first example, there is really no way of legitimizing such a procedure. To put every stolen phrase within quotation marks would produce as almost unreadable and quite worthless, text.

(3) The Paraphrase

Paraphrase: Many fundamental aspects of our government are
Original: Many fundamental aspects of our government are

apparent in the *Second Treatise of Government*. One can safely
apparent in the *Second Treatise of Government*. It can safely

say that the oft- censured Supreme Court really owes its exist-
assert that the much criticized... Court obtained its being as

separate: equally one can say that the allocation of varied
and that the combination of many powers

and widespread authority to the President during the era of
in the hands of the executive under the

the New Deal has still to encounter opposition because it is
New Deal has still to encounter opposition because it is

contrary to the principle enunciated therein... Once more it
contrary to the principle enunciated therein... Again we see

is possible to note the way in which Locke's writing clarified
the crystallizing force of Locke's writing.

The foregoing interlinear presentation shows clearly how the writer has simply traveled along with the original text, substituting approximately equivalent terms except where his understanding fails him, as it does with "crystallizing," or where the ambiguity of the original is too great a tax on his ingenuity for him to proceed, as it is with "to encounter opposition... consciously traced" in the original.

Such a procedure as the one shown in this example has its uses; for one thing, it is valuable for the student's own understanding of the passage; and it may be valuable for the reader as well. How, then, may it be properly used? The procedure is simple. The writer might begin the second sentence with "As Sherman notes in the introduction to his edition of the *Treatise*, one can safely say..." and conclude the paraphrased passage with a footnote giving the additional identification necessary. Or he might indicate directly the exact nature of what he is doing, in this fashion: "To paraphrase Sherman's comment..." and conclude that also with a footnote indicator.

(4) The Apt Term

The *Second Treatise of Government* is a veritable quarry of liberal doctrines. In it the crystallizing force of Locke's writing is markedly apparent. The cause of human liberty, the principle of separation of powers, and the inviolability of private property- all three major dogmas of American constitutionalism- owe their presence in our Constitution in large part to the remarkable *Treatise* which first appeared around 1685 and was destined to spark, within three years, a revolution in the land of its author's birth and, ninety years later, another revolution against the land.

Here the writer has not been able to resist the appropriation of two striking terms – "quarry of liberal doctrines" and "crystallizing force;" a perfectly proper use of the terms would have required only the addition of the phrase: The *Second Treatise of Government* is, to use Sherman's suggestive expression, a "quarry of liberal doctrines." In it the "crystallizing force" – the term again is Sherman's – of Locke's writing markedly apparent...

Since one of the principal aims of college education is the development of intellectual honesty, it is obvious that plagiarism is a particularly serious offense, and punishment for it is commensurately severe. What a penalized student suffers can never really be known by anyone but himself; what the student who plagiarizes and "gets away with it" suffers is less public and probably less acute, but the corruptness of his act, the disloyalty and baseness it entails, must inevitably leave a mark on him as well on the institution of which he is a member.

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