

# A TUTORIAL WITH A TWIST: HOW PLAGIARISM ADVANCES LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

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Plagiarism and other academic integrity violations might be viewed as yet another issue of concern to the whole university, but the responsibility of no single department or unit. For Georgetown University librarians it proved to be an opportunity to combine forces with others on campus to reach students in a new way.

Founded in 1789, Georgetown University has a total enrollment of 13,652 of which 6,719 are undergraduates and 6,933 are graduate students enrolled in the graduate, law and medical schools. As a Catholic and Jesuit institution, the University is committed to the education of the whole person (*cura personalis*). Thus, qualities of character are as important to the University as academic achievement.

For more than 20 years the Lauinger Library staff at Georgetown University has taught students about library resources through a tutorial taken during the first few weeks of the fall semester. The tutorial provides a basic orientation to the library because there is no required class that has a library research instruction component for first-year students. Students build on the knowledge gained in the tutorial through course-related Library instruction. Initially a print-based tour/tutorial, in 1999 the Library initiated an online, self-paced version. Students answered some questions online, but others they wrote on answer sheets that were checked by reference librarians. Although each of the undergraduate schools at Georgetown “required” that their students complete the library tutorial, there was no easy way to enforce compliance, and about 70% of students completed it.

In recent years, the Georgetown University Honor System experienced an increase in honor system violations, especially plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration. Reports in the literature on academic dishonesty suggest that Georgetown’s experience is not unique (Ercegovac & Richardson 2004, p. 306-7). Many students insisted that their violations were inadvertent; they just

didn’t realize what they were doing was wrong. The University deans wanted to find a way to teach incoming students about academic integrity in a systematic way. Thus the deans’ interest in promoting academic integrity dovetailed nicely with the library’s desire for all students to have a baseline of understanding about the library. In 2003, the deans and the University Librarian, along with several other units on campus, began a collaboration that created a new, mandatory tutorial called *Joining the Conversation: Scholarly Research and Academic Integrity*. Students must complete the tutorial by a Fall semester deadline in order to be able to pre-register for Spring semester classes.

The tutorial introduces some of the research skills students need to complete assignments without falling victim to last-minute, unethical shortcuts. At the same time the tutorial acquaints students with academic integrity issues such as plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, re-using old work, and proper citation. Students learn:

- Finding, evaluating, and citing relevant, quality sources
- Academic integrity as defined at Georgetown and about the Honor System
- Availability of research help
- The idea that they are part of an ongoing scholarly conversation.

The purpose of the tutorial, from the library perspective, was to reinforce the idea that library research skills, resources, and services would give students the tools necessary to be more effective researchers and thus avoid the pitfalls leading to academic dishonesty. The library portion of the tutorial is meant as a foundation for additional instruction leading to greater information literacy. Although there are many online library tutorials which address information literacy, as well as several tutorials that tackle plagiarism and academic dishonesty (Bowman 2004), *Joining the Conversation* appears to be atypical because it combines the two.

An online tutorial can reach large numbers of students, is self-paced, uses attractive technology for tech-savvy students, and

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provides automatic collection of statistics and automatic grading. Disadvantages include the heavy investment in development, both in cost and time. Once the tutorial has been launched, it needs to be constantly updated and refreshed to keep up with changes in the library and to improve its effectiveness.

Our initial planning and development involved students and faculty from the Honor Council who helped us choose scenarios that show students grappling with academic integrity and library research problems. Students from the Honor Council crafted the science scenario and contributed to writing other scenes. In addition, students were the cast of characters. G.U. professor James Slevin's conception of research as participating in a scholarly conversation provided the inspiration for the structure of the tutorial. Faculty also provided feedback throughout the process of development.

## TUTORIAL ORGANIZATION

The tutorial is organized into four sections.

- Introduction and Pre-test
- Tutorial
- Post-test
- Conclusion and tip sheet

The first fifteen slides introduce the tutorial and include comments from nine faculty on student participation and responsibility in the scholarly conversation. This is followed by a self-assessment of six questions, randomized from a pool of sixteen, designed to gauge each student's understanding of the issues to be covered in the tutorial.

The heart of the tutorial consists of scenarios showing Georgetown students involved in realistic situations, working on assignments in philosophy, international affairs, biology, English, and business, but most of their topics have to do with researching AIDS. The characters are confronted with research problems and ethical issues, yet they learn how to cope with them. Often they ask for help from librarians, writing center tutors, teaching assistants, and fellow students. Although some characters are tempted to take unethical shortcuts, none does.

As students take the tutorial they follow the characters through scenarios and must correctly answer thirty questions to move forward. Questions cover topics that have just been presented and are multiple choice, multiple answer, or true/false. Feedback is given for both correct and incorrect answers. Students who make an incorrect choice must answer the question again. Both incorrect and correct answers receive a response that reinforces the points being made. The tutorial tool allowed us to create a number of similarly worded questions, from which one question would be randomly selected. This helped prevent students from getting the same question sets.

Following the tutorial scenarios, students take a post-test consisting of twelve randomly-selected questions which review and reinforce the material. As with the pre-test, students may get

questions wrong and still move forward. Both correct and incorrect responses generate feedback. A brief conclusion includes a tip sheet <<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/tutorial/tipsheet.htm>> that students may refer to later.

The tutorial was designed so that students may stop at any point and return to the tutorial where they last answered a question. Unfortunately, those taking the tutorial in Guest Mode must start again from the beginning if they stop mid-way. (Guest Mode: <<http://keyquiz.georgetown.edu/slides/?Action=Preview&Mode=takeQuiz&quizID=18>>)

## TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THE TUTORIAL

A generic quiz tool called KeyQuiz was developed in-house and employs the ColdFusion programming language to dynamically create the tutorial web pages using a SQL Server 2000 database. It is integrated with other University enterprise systems for authentication and for recording the results.

## ADVERTISING THE TUTORIAL

First-year and transfer students learned about the mandatory tutorial requirement through a variety of channels. A critical reminder was a pop-up window that was displayed each time they logged into Student Access+, an authenticated portal to all enterprise systems available to students, until they completed the tutorial. Perhaps most effectively, the deans' offices in each school received weekly lists of those students who had not completed the tutorial. These students were contacted individually to remind them of the need to complete the tutorial by the deadline. Those students who did not complete the tutorial by the deadline were to be prevented from pre-registering in November for Spring semester classes. With one exception, all students required to take the tutorial have completed it before pre-registration begins.

## STUDENT SUCCESS COMPLETING THE TUTORIAL

The tutorial was launched in Fall 2003 and has been a requirement for all new students in each subsequent academic year. We have used various means to assess its effectiveness.

KeyQuiz, the software that runs the tutorial, includes reports on:

- Who has completed the tutorial
- When it was completed
- The percent of answers correct and incorrect in the pre-and post-test and in the tutorial
- Number of people who started the tutorial by date

The total number of users that completed the tutorial in 2003 is 1962, 2004 equals 1843, and in 2005 there were 1954, including the 24 students at our new Qatar campus. These numbers incorporate anyone who completed the tutorial, so they contain those required to take it plus any others who completed it.

Each year we have used the data collected by the KeyQuiz tool to review and revise the questions and content of the tutorial to improve student learning. The results indicate that student understanding has improved. The first year only 58% of students correctly answered the post-test questions while in 2005 80% correctly answered the questions.

In Fall 2004 we surveyed students from all four undergraduate schools who had taken the tutorial and who had direct contact with their dean's office. We gathered information about how long it took to complete the tutorial, how many sessions they needed to complete it, what they thought was the most important thing they learned, in which areas they would like more information, and whether they found the tip sheet helpful. Most completed the tutorial in about two hours or less, our target time-frame. Many reported that they had printed the tip sheet from the end of the tutorial or bookmarked it in their browser.

We included two questions in the survey designed to find out what students learned about the library and about academic integrity. The top five responses to "the most important thing about the library" learned were:

- Using GEORGE (the online catalog)
- The variety of research tools available
- Finding journals and using Journal Finder
- Developing their research skills
- The availability of friendly librarians for consultation and assistance, and how to locate books

The top five "most important thing about academic integrity" learned from the tutorial were:

- Importance of citing information sources
- The definition of plagiarism
- Honor Code and the importance of academic integrity
- Getting permission to reuse old work
- Collaboration

The Scholarly Research and Academic Integrity tutorial seems to have its greatest impact on Honor System cases in the Fall. In the 2002-03 school year, for instance—before the tutorial was instituted—12 cases were brought against first year students in the Fall; 8 in the Spring. However, in 2003-04, after the tutorial began, there were only 3 cases in the Fall yet 10 in the Spring. Similarly, for 2004-05, there were 4 cases in the Fall and 19 in the Spring against first year students. In response to this unusual distribution of cases, we sent a mini-review of academic integrity issues to all undergraduate students in early February 2006 with the hope that the reminder will reduce the number of Spring semester cases.

## HOW DID PLAGIARISM ADVANCE LIBRARY RESEARCH INSTRUCTION?

Faculty and academic administrators care deeply about the integrity of the scholarly conversation. By taking advantage of this concern, the Library was able to achieve the goal of introducing all new students to its services and resources and demonstrating that it is a partner in the scholarly conversation. Working on the tutorial with the Honor Council and others helped us make connections with those on campus who are concerned about university-wide issues that are not the sole responsibility of any given department. In addition to the tutorial collaboration, we have worked with the John Carroll program, an honors program, to team-teach a one-credit, pass/fail research course for the two years it existed. We are implementing a closer collaboration with the Writing Center to enhance research training for Writing Center student tutors. With the University's Office of International Programs we are discussing ways to provide better research support for students studying abroad. Finally, we have been working with the Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS), the University's center for teaching excellence, to find ways to enhance undergraduate research through the proposed Undergraduate Learning Initiative (ULI).

What are the university-wide concerns on your campus that your library research instruction program can enhance? Find what will work—what will bring allies to your cause—and other opportunities will arise. Aligning our goals to take advantage of synergies with other University partners has achieved far more for our library research instruction agenda than would be possible on our own.

## REFERENCES

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