From the Editor

This second annual volume of Plagiary offers certain choice, tantalizing studies and opinions on topics ranging from the “Mystery of Al-Sha-ar Al-Ghushash” to “Chick-Lit’s Re-Packaging of Plagiarism.” A “Plagiarism Disaster” is also in this year’s selection of papers, and even some music as accompaniment, Scanlon’s “Song From Myself”, a duet as it were, in tune with Bretag and Carapiet’s paper on the subject of self-plagiarism. Analyses of gender, ethics, and humor are also on offer in Plagiary 2007 and there is more to come in 2008 by way of papers examining such issues as plagiarism detection, campus plagiarism policies and student values.

In an important new development, journal content is now available to an even wider audience than before. In addition to being published in both hard-copy and e-versions, Plagiary will now be distributed by EBSCO Publishing, making author articles accessible via database search engines used by major libraries worldwide. All articles are still available in both pdf and e-text format from the Scholarly Publishing Office (SPO), University of Michigan Library at the following URL, the permanent journal e-archive:

<http://www.hti.umich.edu/p/plag/>

And online advance versions of articles are still available at the journal homepage as soon as possible after peer review and acceptance for publication:

<http://www.plagiary.org>

As 2008 begins, the so-called “Degree-gate” scandal at West Virginia University is ongoing, an investigation being conducted into whether academic transcripts were altered for Governor Joe Manchin III’s daughter Heather Bresch. Dubious credentials are a troubling issue touched on in Plagiary 2007 by Lisa Richmond’s “Alma Mater Matters: Exposing the Degree Mill Scam”, a review of Ezell and Bear’s Degree Mills: The Billion Dollar Industry That Has Sold Over a Million Fake Diplomas (see pp. 110-11 for Richmond’s review). Fake credentials comprise the stock-in-trade of the degree mill industry; it is deeply troubling when questions arise as to whether courses have been added to student transcripts at legitimate institutions, degrees possibly being awarded that were not earned. “Life experience” credits might be the norm in the various diploma mill scams, but not at institutions whose degrees are based on authentic as opposed to conjured (Wilcox, 2008) transcripts.

Authenticity features prominently in the theme of the upcoming 3rd International Plagiarism Conference at Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne: “Transforming practice for an authentic future.” In June 2008, presenters and participants will examine the challenges facing institutions as they evolve solutions to the issue of ensuring authenticity in learners’ work from secondary through to higher education, and how emerging best practice can inform all sectors.3

Using humor to engage students on the issue of authenticity is one way in which current educators are transforming practice (see Bornstein, current volume, pp. 104-109). Rather than trivializing the issue of plagiarism through the use of humor (as some faculty were concerned about), such an approach would seem to represent the sort of thinking needed to counter the ubiquitous term paper mill sites and the transformations which these shady outfits have themselves undergone in response to widespread use of plagiarism detection technologies. Customized essays written on a fee basis—rather than stock essays from online databases—are now one of the main challenges to authenticity in students’ written work.

How are you engaging your students with issues so vital to academic integrity and authenticity? What are you doing to transform educational practice? Please consider contributing to Plagiary 2008 with research findings of your own, perhaps a perspective or opinion paper, or a relevant review. Hope to see you this June at the 3rd International Plagiarism Conference.

Notes
3 For further details, visit <http://www.plagiarismconference.co.uk/>

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