Avoiding plagiarism - information, communication and referencing

Science Engineering and Technology
Student Research Culture Session
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Plagiarism

• RMIT defines plagiarism as:
  ➢ the presentation of the work, idea or creation of another person as if it were your own
  ➢ a form of cheating
  ➢ a serious offence with serious consequences.

• Intentional - plagiarists get caught!
• Unintentional - can still damage your work and reputation
“Unintended plagiarism”

• Most likely to occur if you fail to cite work that has already been published because you did not know about it

• The best tools available to avoid this:
  - Information
  - Communication
  - Referencing
Tool 1: Information

- First contacts – your supervisor and your school liaison librarian
- Major literature review - at beginning of your project
- Keep up-to-date with developments in your topic area throughout your project
Major literature review

- As comprehensive as possible
- Search scholarly and discipline specific databases as well as specialized and general search engines
- Full-text is not critical at this stage!
- Specialized types of publications may be important eg. patents, technical reports
- Theses databases and repositories – check that no-one has already published a thesis on your intended topic
Keeping up-to-date

- Develop a plan
- Set up electronic alerts in databases and search engines
  - Search alerts - re-run your successful search strategy and send you new results
  - Journals alerts - TOCs of new issues
  - Citation alerts - new articles that cite earlier key papers
- If electronic alerts are not available, you should repeat successful search strategies manually every 3-4 months
Tool 2: Communication

- Good communication networks provide an additional way of keeping in touch with developments in your discipline area and learning about unpublished developments
  - your supervisors
  - your peer groups at RMIT and in the workplace
  - join electronic discussion groups
  - contact experts if appropriate (locate through the internet and databases)
Tool 3: Referencing

“The most common forms of plagiarism are:

– **copying** sentences or paragraphs word-for-word from a source **without proper citation**
– **putting** someone else’s words, thoughts, ideas into your own words (paraphrasing) but **failing to cite your source** with a proper citation
– **piecing together texts** from one or more sources **without appropriate citation**
– **copying** or submitting whole parts of computer files **without acknowledging their sources**”

(Study & Learning Centre, RMIT 2005 Referencing – Harvard, Plagiarism section)
Referencing

• From the beginning of your project record full details of all information sources you consult
• Use either a manual or an electronic system eg. EndNote or LaTex
• Find out early in your project whether a particular style is preferred or recommended by your school and use it consistently in any related written work
EndNote

- EndNote software helps you manage your references. Use it to:
  - create, store and manage references
  - search and retrieve records from databases and catalogues
  - automatically create and format bibliographies in a chosen style

- University licensed
- Library provides:
  - Some troubleshooting assistance

*Start using EndNote early in your project*
Referencing guides & tutorials

- Library provides online guides to the referencing styles most commonly used at RMIT
  http://www.rmit.edu.au/library/info-trek/referencing and additional style manuals in the library collection
- Study & Learning Centre provides interactive tutorials on referencing
  http://www.dlsweb.rmit.edu.au/lsu/content/4_WritingSkills/05referencing.htm
Questions or comments?