Diagnosing Plague: Tools And Techniques For Detecting Plagiarism

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Abstract

Information Literacy warrants acknowledging the documents cited for writing articles, research papers, term papers and assignments. Those who copy/use another person's ideas illegally are now known in the LIS circle as 'Plague Patients'. In order to be free from 'Plague' the academics can use any plagiarism detection tool available. This will help to avoid unintentional duplication of information as well. Plagiarism detection tools are useful to the academic community to detect plagiarism of others and avoid such unlawful activity. The present paper describes some of the plagiarism detection tools available for plagiarism checking.

Keywords: Plagiarism, Plague Patient, Plagiarism Detection Tools, Viper, Plagiarism Detect, Dupli Checker, Plagiarism Checker, Copy Tracker, Plagium, SeeSources, Chimpsky, Turnitin

1.   Introduction

Plagiarism is the outcome of 'Information Illiteracy'. According to Standard Five of the Information Literacy Competency Standards approved by Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)[1], 'the information literate student understands many of the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally'. One of the performance indicators of this standard says that 'the information literate student acknowledges the use of information sources in communicating the product or performance.'

Plagiarism is an idea, phrase or story that has been copied from another person's work, without stating where it came from [2]. The act of unauthorized copying and presenting another person's work as if it is one's own also can be termed as plagiarism. Thus it is very clear that nobody restricts a person in using the information available in other sources except the unauthorized copying without acknowledging the original work and presenting other person's works as one's own original work.

Among the academic community plagiarism is considered academic dishonesty or academic fraud, and offenders will have to face serious consequences from suspension to termination. This also will lead to questioning the very integrity of an academic [3]. Thus plagiarism is an ethical as well as legal issue among the academic community.

2.   The Plague Patient

Those who involve in the act of plagiarism are now known among the academic community as "Plague Patients". The blog claimed to be created by Maria Thelwall [4], a Danish Post Graduate Legal Studies student with the title "Plagiarised" gives many examples of the act of plagiarism and

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she claims that her sole purpose of blogging is to expose plagiarism. The blog posts cite the examples of copying even the mistakes in the original articles without giving any reference to the original.

Plagiarism may sometimes happen unintentionally or without the knowledge of an author. Forgetting to cite an author may sometimes happen. Likewise, when articles are prepared by research students with joint authorship of the research guide, the guide may take the student in good faith and overlook plagiarism. However, he cannot avoid shouldering the moral responsibility.

Detecting 'Plague' is therefore of much importance to keep up the academic integrity and care should be taken against unintentional plagiarism as well. The proliferations of electronic form of documents made it easy for everybody to copy and duplicate any item of information which ultimately resulted in easiness in plagiarizing information. But, on the other side the electronic presence of information and developments in electronic tools and techniques have become a boon to easily detecting plagiarism. There are hundreds of tools which range from free online plagiarism detection to plagiarism detection software to 'diagnose Plague'.

3. Plagiarism Detection Tools

Using plagiarism detection tools helps one to identify whether he/she has accidentally included a part of another person's work without giving proper citation and to verify the genuineness of other's works. Plagiarizing a term or part of sentence may be identified by using a web browser. However, there may be paragraphs and even the full document which are copied and pasted without proper acknowledgement. Such unlawful and unethical act is to be identified and restricted to uphold the academic ethics. As mentioned earlier there are a number of plagiarism detection tools. Only some are discussed here. Plagiarism detection tools range from online service to free as well as commercial software packages.

3.1 Viper Plagiarism Scanner

Viper Plagiarism Scanner is a freeware which can be downloaded from http://www.scanmyessay.com [5]. Viper has an easy to use interface and it scans about 10 billion resource to check cases of plagiarism. It also provides editing service and helps to avoid spelling and grammatical errors in the assignments and papers. It also helps to provide a standard bibliography with consistent standard.

3.2 Plagiarism Detect.com

Plagiarism Detect.com is an advanced plagiarism detection service. It provides two accounts- the demo account and accurate account. The demo account is purely demonstrational to see the basic principles of plagiarism scanning. Though it is free, scanning the document through the demo account is limited to 100 words and the accuracy is not 100 percent [6].

The accurate account provides facility to multi-layered scanning and ensures accuracy in plagiarism detection. In accurate account there is no limit to the page for plagiarism checking and sends the

result to the e-mail address of the user who uploads file for plagiarism checking. It is available at a price of 4.95 Dollars.

3.3   Dupli Checker

Dupli Checker is a free online plagiarism detection tool. The users need not register to avail the service of this free software. The writers can check the content through the search engines like Google, Yahoo and MSN. The users can type a few phrases or paste their article in the box given for checking on this free plagiarism tool. To check plagiarism users have to select the search engine. The software will check the cases of plagiarism and will show the result when clicked on the search button. Hence, the plagiarism check is at one's finger tips [7].

3.4   Plagiarism Checker

Plagiarism Checker is a free online plagiarism detection tool. It checks the text submitted by the users by splitting up the piece into small, distinct fragments. After identifying plagiarism it will report the results. It is fully free and no registration or paid membership is needed for checking plagiarism through 'Plagiarism Checker' [8].

3.5   Copy Tracker

CopyTracker is a free plagiarism detection software to check plagiarism in text documents. It is an open source software under General Public License. As the source code is freely accessible anybody can use or modify and distribute the improved products. The beta version of CopyTracker Online is also now available. The text, html, doc or docx files can be scanned for plagiarism checking using CopyTrcker [9].

3.6   Plagium

Plagium plagiarism checker is a free online service now in the beta stage. By pasting the content to be tested anybody from anywhere can check for plagiarism. Users can also check the content of the URL for its source through Plagium. As this service is provided free of cost, this is maintained with the donation of the users [10].

3.7   See Sources

SeeSources is an online plagiarism checker which takes whole text from a file and detects plagiarism just by selecting the file and clicking on 'Start Analysis'. Users can upload .doc, .docx, .htm or .txt documents for plagiarism checking. Users can also copy and paste a document and check plagiarism through this service. There is no need to install any software to check plagiarism through SeeSources. The advanced version of SeeSources is developed in the name PlagScan [11].

3.8   Chimpsky

Chimpsky is a free plagiarism detection tool to check duplicated content in text documents. Though it is free, users have to log in to use the service of Chimpsky. To learn about the functionality of this

tool, users can login as 'demo' using the password 'demo'. It extracts all text documents in all text formats to plain text format as it uses plain texts internally to check for plagiarism [12].

3.9   Turnitin

Turnitin is a plagiarism detection service provided to check possible cases of plagiarism especially in students' written work. Checking plagiarism through Turnitin needs license. When a paper is submitted to Turnitin, it compares the work with its own database and many other educational databases. It claims that apart from preventing plagiarism, Turnitin supports high quality writing by proper feedback [13].

4.   Plagiarism Checking Experiment

The result of the plagiarism checking experiment on 'Dupli Checker' is given in the following screen shots. A paragraph taken from Wikipedia is used for checking plagiarism. The screen shots of the 'Dupli Checker' shows how it works.
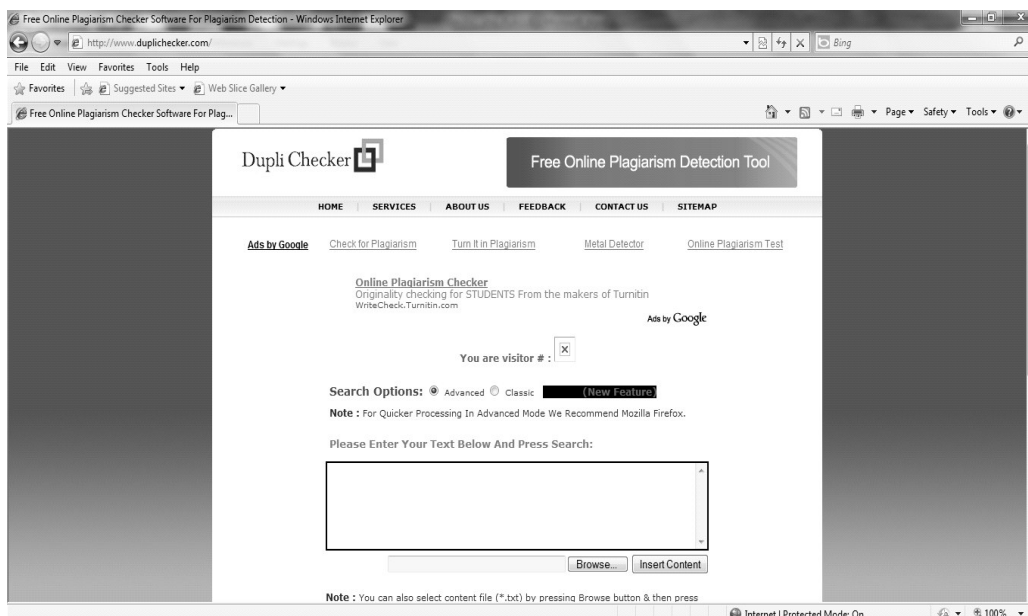

Figure 1: Home Page of Dupli Checker

It can be seen that the online plagiarism detection tool provides a box to paste the text for plagiarism checking. There is a browse option as well to take a whole document from any file for plagiarism detection.
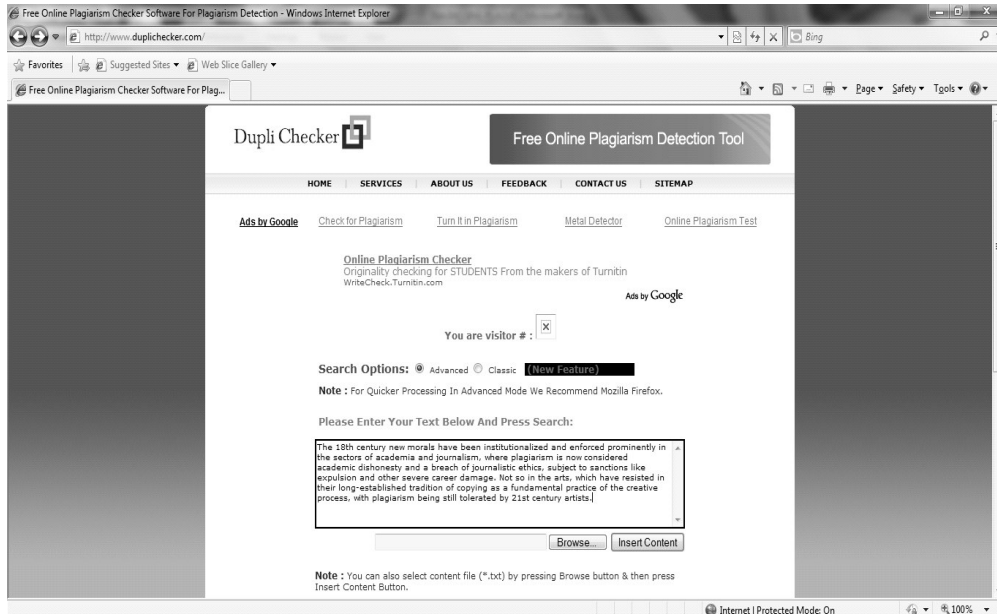
Figure 2: Text Pasted in the Box

Figure 2 shows the matter taken from Wikipedia pasted in the box provided. The plagiarism detection tool will compare the matter pasted in the box with other sources when clicked on the search button after selecting the search engine.
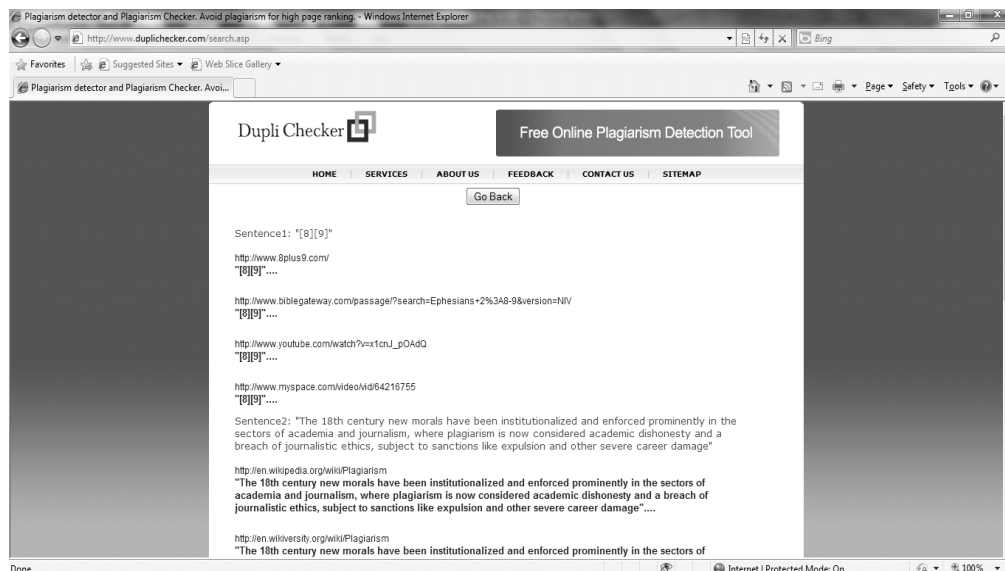

Figure 3: Report of Plagiarism

Figure 3 shows the report that the matter is plagiarized and the source from where it is copied. Thus detecting plagiarism is just a matter of few seconds.

5.   Authenticity and Privacy

Many of the plagiarism detection tools now available claim that there is 100 percent privacy for the text submitted by the users for plagiarism detection. The perfection and authenticity also is claimed to be high. However, there is a criticism that some of the plagiarism detection service providers store the text submitted by the users in their database and use them for future plagiarism checking. This is the violation of the copy right of such authors. It is also pointed out that submitting the written works of one person for plagiarism detection without his permission has the presumption of guilt and the violation of the right to privacy.

6.   Conclusion

Plagiarism is a crime. However, unintentional plagiarism is to be taken on another level. With the development of web based resources, plagiarism detection is now as easy as plagiarizing a document. Most of the cases of plagiarism is the result of lack of awareness about the copyright rules and the ethics related to the use of information. The students consider copying and pasting information from the Internet for writing assignment easy and convenient and they are not aware that it is against copyright law [14]. Proper information literacy training is essential to change the situation.

Plagiarism, however, is to be detected and discouraged at all levels. Making the information users aware about the judicious use of information and pattern of acknowledging even at the stage of learning is essential. The awareness about the plagiarism detection tools will help to avoid plagiarism to a great extent.

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