

# ALPS LINK: Site of the Month

By Vera Spika.

November's ALPS LINK Site of the Month features the SFU Library's [Plagiarism Tutorial](#). The interactive and concise format of the SFU's tutorial makes it an exceptional tool.

Site of the Month profiles some of the excellent instructional materials being produced by academic librarians in British Columbia. ALPS LINK (Library Instructions Knapsack) is "a repository of learning objects to support academic librarians in their instructional role." These learning objects are all available for reuse and modifying by the library community. Most are licensed under the Creative Commons license Attribution/Share Alike. To learn more, visit the ALPS LINK Portal at <http://www.eln.bc.ca/link/>.

ALPS LINK spoke with Librarian Yolanda Koscielski at Simon Fraser University Library about the Plagiarism Tutorial.

1. In Part 1, Introduction of the Plagiarism Tutorial, once students have taken the first short quiz of the tutorial, they are referred to a 2002 article [campus: Cheaters punished](#) published in the PEAK, the SFU student newspaper. It discusses the story about several economic students accused and later punished for plagiarism. Did this event have anything to do with the impetus for creating the tutorial?

Yes that was the impetus. After that incident with the BUEC 333 class (Business Economics), the Task Force on Academic Honesty and Integrity was created in March 2002. One of the report's recommendations (released in 2004), which makes reference to that course, was to create a plagiarism tutorial module <http://www.sfu.ca/integritytaskforce/releasedreport.pdf>. I think that the one thing they wanted covered was the unintentional plagiarism and "to allow students to test their skill with paraphrase. Such a module could be maintained by the Library ..."

2. How is the tutorial accessed and promoted by the librarians?

There are actually two. One is on WebCT and one is a publicly assessable link on *the Library's webpage*. The content is identical. The online one is anonymous and can be done at the student's own pace. You can self report but it's for your own use. With the WebCT version the tutorial is course integrated. We

send out a notice to the faculty list serve at the beginning of each semester to advertise both versions with an invitation to request the insertion of the tutorial into their WebCT courses. With course integration, some instructors opt to have the student's results graded or give credit for participation. To verify participation, faculty can see how long the student took to complete it. Basically it is in the instructors' hands to administer how they would like.

We promote it to students at the reference desk and in library instruction classes and we have an item under our News and Events link at the beginning of each semester. We get a lot a lot of questions at the desk about paraphrasing and citations. That was one of the goals of the Task Force that it covers unintentional plagiarism which is part of academic discourse which is not intuitive. It is a learned skill.

3. What would you say the numbers of requests from faculty? Are there quite a lot of them?

Yes.

4. Is the library able to gather information about its usage (e.g. frequency of use, subject areas of users)?

Probably the best figure to quote is the 2009 SFU Undergraduate Student survey where 42% of undergraduates said that they had taken the tutorial. So that is pretty impressive, that's almost half of the student population – so in one way or another they are getting to it.

5. Despite its concision and seeming simplicity, the tutorial is actually a very sophisticated tool that appears to be the product of a team effort over time. Could you talk about its development since its creation?

In the summer of 2004 two co-op students Carolyn Soltau and Sara Davidson created it using original WebCT Content from science lecturer Susan Stevenson. They edited quite a bit under the direction of Gordon Coleman, the Reference Liaison Librarian at the time. That was also when Elaine Fairey was the Head of Reference. So there were a lot of hands in it at the beginning but it was really Carolyn and Sara who created the first tutorial. It is pretty much same now as then.

6. What role you played in the development of the tutorial?

There was also one other key player in this and that was Mark Jordan, the Systems Librarian. He developed the original software for the tutorial. Over time, we needed to find a new platform for the tutorial. The three criteria that it had to meet was that it was open to the community outside SFU, it had quiz functionality, and was hosted on open source software that could be supported in the long term. We had already migrated our web pages over to Drupal *and* it turned out that Drupal had quiz functionality that we were able to make use of.

My work was to research various platforms, consult with multiple stakeholders, and oversee the migration of it. I also did a few revisions, making sure it was compatible with the revised APA and MLA guides

7. Do you know what disciplines use it the most? For instance do the Humanities disciplines ask for it more than those in engineering - because typically the former demands more papers from students than the latter?

It's actually quite varied, so everything from contemporary arts to biology. Most of the science and the applied science courses here have W courses, a first year writing course where they would insert the plagiarism tutorial. It is neat to see so many disciplines show an interest in it.

All CODE courses (Centre of Online Distance Education) (about 80 courses) link to the tutorial.

8. Have you had any feedback from students about the time needed or do people say that it is good or too long or too short. And how would hear about it?

The reception is generally positive. I think they [students] are glad that we have it in the first place. From the faculty we hear that they are pleased that the library is providing the tutorial and that there is an option for a graded component. We've had faculty catch students who plagiarized in their in their classes and subsequently made completing the tutorial part of the student *course requirement*.

9. A number of other post secondary institutions provide links to the tutorial – are there any others that you are aware of that use it?

We frequently have requests from diverse locations to use the tutorial For instance, one was from a 9<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Goochland County, Virginia, another was from North Western Connecticut Community College, and perhaps the most far away one was from Peking University Health Science Centre in China.

Please see the SFU tutorial and other excellent learning objects in ALPS LINK:  
<http://www.eln.bc.ca/link/>.

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