

Originality & Attribution

*A guide for student writers
at Vassar College*

Foreword

In the dozen years or so since a group of Vassar faculty members first put together *Originality and Attribution: A Guide for Student Writers at Vassar College*, the pamphlet has proved extraordinarily valuable within the college and has in addition served as a model for many, similar publications at a range of colleges and universities. It has served excellently its two original intentions: to provide a broad and thoughtful framework in which Vassar students could explore the often knotty question of where the formulations of their ideas were original to them and where they were obliged to give credit to others and to raise questions about specific circumstances, such as laboratory collaboration, and specific practices in attribution among the several disciplines.

While each succeeding version of the pamphlet had allowed for some updating, the Academic Panel agreed in the 1990-91 academic year to undertake its thorough review and revision. The resulting second edition retains the excellent general essay on academic originality, first drawn together by Robert DeMaria and revised by him and contains revised sections on collaboration and on the consultation of secondary sources. It includes also a new section on computers and electronic texts and one comprised of “tips” to students from the student members of the panel. The final section, which contains specific departmental advice, has undergone successive revision over the years but will, I hope, be further expanded in subsequent versions.

Taken together, the parts of this valuable little pamphlet provide a broad and provocative range of information and speculation about questions important not only to the “student writers” addressed in the original title but to Vassar students in all aspects of their work as scholars, as the slightly changed title suggests. We are particularly hopeful that closer integration of *Originality and Attribution* into the work of the Freshman Course Program will aid first year students in confronting its complicated but crucial subjects. I am grateful to the panel faculty members, Mark Amodio, Kathy Campbell and Karen Lucic, to James Merrell and Robert DeMaria—faculty ex-members who assisted them—and to the student members of the panel, ably led this year by Steve Birnbaum '91, for their diligent and thoughtful help with this revision.

Colton Johnson
Dean of Studies and Chair, Academic Panel
August, 1991
Dean of the College
July, 1994

In light of the reality that *Originality and Attribution* is a “living document” whose intent is to aid students in their day to day scholarship, this pamphlet has been regularly updated to reflect the emergence of new writing and research technologies, and to clarify some of the ambiguous circumstances that have come to the attention of the Academic Panel in recent years. As always, I am most grateful to the faculty and students who have served so ably on the Academic Panel for their suggestions and insights.

Alexander M. Thompson III
Dean of Studies and Chair, Academic Panel
April, 2003

Revised September 2003 by Alexander Thompson

Part One

In making footnotes and other kinds of reference, you are often asked to follow rules that are basically arbitrary. The placement of notes in a paper and the various combinations of parentheses and colons required in various disciplines are matters of convention, like the conventions of traffic safety. However, the act of acknowledging your intellectual sources is not merely a formality. On the contrary, accuracy and honesty of citation are the basic requirements of sound scholarship and research. A failure to attribute borrowed or derivative information to its proper source is a serious form of academic failure, for two reasons. First, when students or, for that matter anyone writes a paper, the implicit audience is everyone who has an interest in the topics addressed, and the writer is accepting an invitation to become a member of that scholarly community. Good citizenship in that community of scholars requires that each participant be as revealing as possible regarding the sources and stimuli of whatever insights appear in the paper in order to invite others to participate as fully as possible in the scholarly enterprise. Secondly, plagiarism is an ethical failure—one that is acutely offensive to academic communities, for a permanent commitment to intellectual honesty should be one of the results of a liberal education. Achieving a full understanding of academic honesty is an implicit goal in every course offered at the College. The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide an introduction to this important part of your educational experience.

What is plagiarism? Everyone seems to know that this is a grave term, which is as it should be since the word comes from a Latin word meaning kidnapper or seducer (*OED*, “plagiary”), but many students are unsure about when it applies. Although some situations are complicated, the concept can be expressed quite simply: presenting someone else’s work in your paper, lab report, or class talk as though it were your own is plagiarism, unless you make a proper acknowledgment of the debt. There are many acceptable forms of acknowledgment, but, the purpose of them all is to indicate what parts of your presentation derive partly or wholly from others.

Plagiarism

Most of the questions about plagiarism and about acknowledgment of sources stem from the question of what is one’s own and what properly belongs to another. Because it operates through printed and electronic media, plagiarism is often so removed from personal and physical life that it is hard to remember that it is theft. Plagiarism has a long history, but it is in some ways a relatively modern disease. The development of print technology greatly increased the possibilities of plagiarism in the eighteenth

century. This trend continued into the nineteenth century, and, perhaps as a reaction to it, a greater and greater cultural premium was placed on originality. Ironically, of course, the pressure to be original very often contributes to dishonesty, and recent technological advances, such as photocopying and word processing, have again multiplied the possibilities for plagiarism. The pressure to be original and the temptation to overlook proper forms of acknowledgment are by no means limited to undergraduates. The problem is widespread enough that Ralph Nader now heads a “watchdog” agency devoted to investigating plagiarism in the academic world. At whatever level it occurs, plagiarism demeans the activities of scholarship and education, especially in the discipline and the institution in which it occurs. Still, for all its complication in technologies and shifting codes of value, plagiarism is, after all, theft, and you do not want to be accused, as Sir Robert Peel was by Benjamin Disraeli, of being “a burglar of others’ intellect.”¹

Perhaps it is a sign that scholarly procedures are already demeaned in some eyes that the Academic Panel, which judges cases of alleged plagiarism at Vassar, has so often heard students say that if they had acknowledged all their sources properly, the paper would not have looked right; it would not have appeared to be the original work that was required. Footnotes are a sign of intellectual debt, but the absence of footnotes is not what makes an essay original! It is important to remember that originality is a relative term. No work is absolutely original. We are all indebted to other students, teachers, and writers for the formation of our ideas. This does not mean that everything we say ought to be followed by a footnote, but probably too little of what appears in student papers, scholarly articles, and books is accompanied by appropriate acknowledgment. In general, it is better to err on the side of having too many footnotes than too few: the worst offense in attributing too much of your argument to other sources is misplaced zeal, while the offense in attributing too little is usually plagiarism. If the material that you present can be assigned to a source, then it probably ought to be assigned to a source.

Sources that must be acknowledged obviously include the actual words of another writer or speaker. These must be enclosed in quotation marks and followed by a footnote or a parenthetical citation. For example, if this pamphlet covered questions of style, I might quote a noted authority who said, “Wherever we can make twenty-five words do the work of fifty, we halve the area in which looseness and disorganization can flourish, and by reducing the span of attention required we increase the force of the thought.”²

¹ *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, Third Series. Vol. LXXXVI (May 15, 1846), 675.

² Wilson Follett, *Modern American Usage* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), p. 14.

When and how to acknowledge sources

Direct quotation is probably the simplest case to handle. Just remember to enclose all the words of others in quotation marks and to refer your reader to a footnote that includes the pertinent information about them. Part of that information is the page number. References to sources, it must be remembered, serve a purpose besides attesting to the honesty of the writer: your footnotes make it possible for your reader to follow in the footsteps of your inquiry or to perform again the intellectual experiment about which you have reported in your paper. Your acknowledgment should provide your reader with all the information he or she would need in order to repeat your inquiry. Your expository essay should represent your particular view of an artifact, a situation, or a condition of things, and only by retracing the path you took to arrive at that view can your reader fully appreciate the justness or plausibility of it.

The next most straightforward case in which acknowledgment is required is in paraphrases of another's words. A paraphrase is a sort of translation from the language of the source to one's own language; the translation can be close or loose, but in any case, it requires a footnote. Again, if I were speaking of style, I might paraphrase the remark of Wilson Follett which I quoted above. In a close paraphrase I might observe that Wilson Follett reminds us that when we halve the number of words we use to express a thought, we diminish by half the possibility of disorder.³ When paraphrasing, it is often a good idea to indicate in your prose that you are doing so; such an indication takes the place of quotation marks in letting your reader know right away that you are using a source. A very close paraphrase is often misleading; probably it is best in such cases (even in the preceding example) to omit the paraphrase and just give the quotation directly. Many of the cases of plagiarism heard by the Academic Panel involve unacknowledged paraphrase so close to the original that it should have been reduced to direct quotation. One of the sources of this error, apparently, is poor note-taking. In their notes, scholars should not fail to distinguish between their own words and the words of their sources. It is a good idea to use quotation marks in your notes just as you must in your paper. Where possible, it is advisable to return to your source when you decide to include it in your paper. This not only prevents plagiarism, but it also gives you an opportunity to check the quotation if you decide to use it directly. Apart from stealing them, the worst thing you can do to another's words is to misquote or misrepresent them. If you do paraphrase, make sure it is with a purpose like amplification, clarification, abbreviation, or application to the special concerns of your paper. Discourse that one hears in conversation or in the classroom is more likely to require paraphrasing than written language. Just remember that

Paraphrase

³ Follett, p. 14.

spoken words as well as written words can provide a source that ought to be acknowledged.

There is little reason to fear having too many references in a paper. One of the things you are trying to show in a paper, after all, is that you have read the material assigned by the instructor, and for that matter, attended the classes. Furthermore, your points will be strengthened rather than weakened if you support them with the remarks of known authorities. Obviously, a paper ought to include original ideas, but original doesn't mean aboriginal. Most original ideas stand on a foundation of received thinking which ought, as far as possible, to be acknowledged. Besides this, most teachers will agree that an idea is original if you think of it for yourself, if it originates in your mind; it need not be new under the sun. A paper is often the culmination or the product of a certain period of study, but it is important to understand that it is not separate from the study. In a sense, we begin writing our papers the first day we begin studying. The way one reads a social document or a certain poem, for example, has a tremendous influence on the way one eventually writes about it. Reading and writing, studying and writing papers are parts of one activity. Original work comes out of following a course of learning that begins with reading and listening and culminates in a piece of written work. Acknowledgment in papers may be seen as a record of the intellectual acts that led up to the paper itself.

Once past direct quotation and paraphrase, the question of what must be footnoted becomes more difficult. Sometimes you will be aware that your discussion in one place would not have been possible if you had not read a particular source. In such a case the first requirement is an act of self-examination. Ask yourself if you could have made your remarks if you had not read the pertinent work; when in doubt, make an acknowledgment. Try to be as specific as possible in making the acknowledgment; narrow it down to a page if you can. But if you cannot, if, indeed, your reliance is upon the general drift of a whole book or article, at least make a reference to the work followed by the word "throughout" or its Latin equivalent "*passim*." Another possibility is to write out a footnote in which you say that you are indebted to the work or highly influenced by it. In an issue of a scholarly journal, for example, I found the following footnote: "This paragraph and the next reflect my debt to Marcus Klein's interpretation of *Invisible Man* in 'Ralph Ellison,' *After Alienation* (New York: World, 1964), pp. 71-146."⁴ No teacher will think less of you for recognizing your debt to another writer. In addition to acknowledging debts to other writers, you also have a responsibility to note instances in which you re-use material from your own previously submitted papers. All of the standard rules of

⁴ Susan L. Blake, "Ritual and Rationalization: Black Folklore in the Works of Ralph Ellison," *PMLA*, 94 (1979), 135, n. 16.

proper acknowledgment discussed above apply when you cite your own work.

At this point you may be driven to ask if there is anything that does not need acknowledgment. At one depth or another it becomes impossible to distinguish derivative knowledge and insights from those that are one's own. My whole approach to reading for the rest of my life will continue to bear the influence of a few great teachers and books, but I only feel obliged to recognize these sources when I can see their influence in a fairly specific way. Though they should be a record of the intellectual endeavor culminating in the paper at hand, footnotes need not provide a complete intellectual autobiography.

In addition to sources that have been long modified and thoroughly assimilated, there is a realm of "common knowledge" that usually does not require documentation. It is not always easy to say where common knowledge ends and personal perceptions or findings begin. A distinction should be made between individual, undisputed facts and connected narratives of information. The fact that Samuel Johnson was born in Lichfield on the 18th of September, 1709, may be accounted common knowledge, and, if you included it in a paper, there would be no need for a footnote. But, should you talk about his father Michael's bookshop or the untimely death of his brother Nathaniel, it would be best to indicate the source of your knowledge. In using such information, you are relying on a continuous tradition of research, and it is best to let your reader know just how you tapped into the source. No one expects you to be able to do original research into every matter, but you should let your reader know upon whom you rely. In the case of biographical information, it might be appropriate to use a general acknowledgment such as the following: I take my information about Johnson's family background from James Clifford's *Young Samuel Johnson*.⁵ Your reader can then go to Clifford if he or she wants to know the ultimate sources of the information.

A similar problem of distinguishing between what is common and what is personal property can arise with respect to phrases. Many of the words and phrases we use everyday were at one time or another made up by individuals. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the first to use the word "psychological," and for some time afterwards, it was appropriate for writers who used the word to enclose it in quotation marks and indicate their indebtedness to Coleridge. However, by now the word has been used so often and by so many writers that, obviously, it belongs to the language that we all share. It has been thoroughly assimilated. The same is true, for example, of the phrase "shades of meaning," which was probably invented by Samuel Johnson. One of the reasons

When acknowledgment is unnecessary

Public domain

⁵ New York: McGraw Hill, 1955.

that these two examples present no difficulty whatsoever is that most of us do not even know their origins. Other phrases are more problematical. In one of his letters John Keats praised Shakespeare for his “negative capability.”⁶ Innumerable writers since Keats have used this phrase, but they have usually indicated the source. Partly because it is not readily comprehensible, because it is an odd combination of words, the phrase has not become entirely public. When you use a familiar phrase that has entered into the general vocabulary, there is no need to footnote it unless you use it in reference to its original context. Take, for example, the well-known phrase “an iron curtain” coined by Sir Winston Churchill. In an essay on class barriers in Victorian London, you might write: The slums of the East End were an unknown land, a *terra incognita*, to the governing classes, for an iron curtain existed between the rich and poor. Clearly you do not have to footnote the phrase “iron curtain.” But if, in an essay on Cold War diplomacy, you were to write: Many historians have dated the beginnings of the Cold War period from the spring of 1946, when Churchill first stressed that the Russians had drawn “an iron curtain” dividing free Western Europe from the Russian satellites to the east, you would give a full citation, and, indeed, rather than clutter up the text of your essay, you might want to consign the exact quotation to the footnote.⁷

I hope that the second part of this pamphlet will clear up some of the general problems and unanswered questions raised here. Still, you are likely to have questions when you come to write one paper or another. Do not hesitate to bring questions concerning the proprieties of attribution to your teachers. Although they cannot be held responsible for a student’s failure to obey the principles of intellectual honesty, it is their responsibility to answer reasonable questions about this matter. Besides, what appears to be a relatively insignificant query about whether or not a certain fact, phrase, or passage requires a footnote can sometimes develop into a very interesting intellectual question. It seems to me that the question of when knowledge can be judged to have entered the public domain is interesting, and it is fascinating to trace the progress of knowledge in its passage from the personal to the public and to speculate on why some things become public almost instantly while others, despite very frequent use, may remain private. Questions of acknowledgment are also likely to throw light on the whole activity of paper writing and, in turn, on the process of learning itself. Furthermore, two of the primary requisites in determining what needs acknowledgment are self-examination and honesty. Nothing is more essential to a liberal education than a strict regard for the truth, and a close attention to details of attribution is not at all a bad way to

⁶ “To George and Tom Keats, 21, 27 (?) December, 1817,” *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings (London: Oxford Univ Press 1970), p. 43.

⁷ “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.” Sir Winston Churchill, speech delivered on March 5, 1946, at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, in Robert R. James, ed., *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897-1963*, Vol III, 1948-1949 (London: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), p. 7290.

develop and maintain that regard. Questions of attribution provide a ground where academic and ethical concerns intersect, and for this reason alone they are worthy of serious treatment in the classroom.

Robert DeMaria, Jr., with generous assistance from Michael Herzfeld, Peter Stillman, Ben Harris, Donald Williams, and Tony Wohl.

(Revised, 1991)

Part Two

This section addresses itself to special problems of originality and attribution that arise in various circumstances and in specific disciplines. Contributions to this section have changed over the years, and you may very well want to add here whatever particular information about the problem you gather from your various instructors. The material we have to offer at this time falls into five main categories: the various forms of collaboration which, although they are especially relevant to work in the sciences, are found in all areas of study; the advantages and disadvantages of using secondary sources; particular concerns raised by the use of computers and electronic text; some “tips” compiled by student members of the Academic Panel and particular advice on the forms of attribution recommended by various departments.

A. Collaboration and Acknowledgment

While the college values intellectual interaction among students as an integral part of the learning process and thus encourages informal exchanges of ideas in study groups and discussions, no formal collaboration should take place in course work at Vassar unless its nature is set forth in advance and in detail by your instructor. In realizing the value of such interactions, you must recognize that collaboration entails certain responsibilities and that in most cases you will be expected to distinguish your individual contributions from those of collaborators or of a study group. This applies to all groups, including those convened electronically. Given the plurality of pedagogical approaches at Vassar, you should also be aware that each discipline sets its own terms for collaboration. Therefore, you should consult with each instructor for guidelines before embarking on a collaborative project.

Arriving at an original perspective on an assignment is an essential part of the educational process. Students who turn to other students' work for a basic approach to fulfilling an assignment almost certainly short-circuit an essential aspect of learning. After you have developed a thesis or a set of concerns, it may be desirable in rare cases to consult another student's work for ideas about bibliography or comparative approaches. However, the college's rules of citation still apply in these cases. Quoting or taking significant ideas from another student's work must be acknowledged. Not doing so constitutes plagiarism, as much as if the work consulted were a published text.

Scientific inquiry is a communal enterprise, and ideas for experimentation are often the product of group discussion and analysis. At Vassar, laboratory work is often conducted in pairs or in larger groups in order to stimulate critical discussion among peers, to help students analyze issues from diverse points of view, and to allow efficient usage of limited apparatus and supplies. When an idea for an experiment grows out of discussion within a group or even across groups, it is often difficult to discern the exact contribution of each individual. Of course, this state of affairs arises frequently in the work done by professional scientists who collaborate with others on parts or in all phases of their research, and it is best to follow their policy regarding acknowledgment. The policy of professional scientists is to acknowledge explicitly the contribution of others if there is any question whatsoever about whether or not an idea originated in one's own efforts. Proper acknowledgment may be achieved in numerous ways; which one is most appropriate depends on the nature of the other person's contribution. If another person helped to conceive the idea behind the experiment but did not participate in designing, conducting, or analyzing the experiment, then acknowledgment may be made through the use of a footnote in which one expresses indebtedness for the particular insight provided. If the particular insight of the other person cannot be specified, then the footnote might read as follows:

The idea for this experiment grew out of discussion with Robert Phillips, to whom I extend my gratitude. Any faults in the experiment reported here or in its interpretation are solely my responsibility

When the contribution of another has been more extensive and shows in all aspects of the project, the policy is to assign authorship to all of the contributors. Papers with multiple authors are very common in the sciences, and the relative importance of each contribution, typically, is indicated by the order of the list of authors; the first author listed is usually the principal contributor to the project. At

Vassar, a laboratory instructor may permit or even encourage collaboration on some or all phases of a project, and it is your responsibility to find out from the instructor which parts of a project may be collaborative. Instructors expect each student to write his or her own research report, unless otherwise indicated, and your instructor may not ask you to include your lab partner as coauthor. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to list the names of your lab partners on the title page of your report. By doing so, you acknowledge the contribution of your partners to those aspects of the project (for example, the execution of the experiment) that your instructor specified could be done collaboratively. However, if your paper includes specific phrases or insights of your partner concerning the conception, the analysis, or the interpretation of the experiment, you should acknowledge that specific contribution either in the introduction, or in the acknowledgments section.

B. The Decision to Consult Secondary Sources

Because of the diverse standards and interpretative approaches in various fields, it is advisable to consult with your instructors for guidelines on the proper use of secondary sources in each course you take at Vassar. The use of secondary sources in every case depends on the varying demands and expectations in different assignments and in different courses. In introductory English, for example, the expectation is that a student will rarely consult a scholarly article written on the literary work he or she has been asked to read or explain. In many other humanities courses, students immediately begin consulting secondary sources as part of their introduction to the discipline. This is also true in the natural sciences where the primary literature on a particular topic is often highly technical and specialized, and authors often assume that the reader knows the broader framework of issues and theories into which their research fits.

The teachers of English courses want each student to develop an individual, personal approach to reading and interpretation, and secondary sources are not likely to be helpful in the early stages of such development. In fact, they might inhibit a student's confidence in his or her own ability to understand and explicate a text. Even in more advanced English courses, the use of secondary sources is not advised without a warning. If you begin an assignment with only a vague idea of what you want to say, and then read through the scholarly literature on your chosen topic, you may be tempted to adopt a point of view or interpretation from the sources you read. This not only short-circuits the learning process by disallowing the formulation of your own original ideas, it also sometimes leads to plagiarism. To

prevent this, students in English studies should write their papers, or draft them, before they consult other scholars' works. If you write out your thoughts first and then investigate the secondary literature, you may find related ideas but never one that is precisely the same as your own. This is because the expression of an idea is not separate from the idea itself.

In art history courses, works of painting, sculpture and architecture are considered primary material, and students—especially at the introductory level—are often asked to analyze such objects without recourse to the interpretations of other scholars. As in English courses, this helps develop students' confidence in their own ability to understand and to explain the meaning of works of art. But in other assignments, students are required to read and to examine critically the writings of various art historians, not only to gain important information about the works but also in order to assess the validity of contrasting methodological approaches to interpretation. The ability to read and evaluate secondary sources in an intelligent and critical way is an essential aspect of study in this discipline, and therefore students must consult them in many of their art history courses and cite them properly in their papers.

In the sciences, secondary sources may be particularly valuable in defining broad goals of a particular type of research and in providing the background information regarding observations, methodology, and technical vocabulary required for understanding the primary literature. As in other disciplines, however, secondary sources in the natural sciences may limit one's own thinking on a subject of inquiry. This is especially true in the natural sciences where the primary literature on a particular topic is often highly technical and specialized, and authors often assume that the reader knows the broader framework of issues and theories into which their research fits. Thus, a student enrolled in Abnormal Psychology who is not a Biopsychology major but who wishes nevertheless to write on the neurophysiological bases of schizophrenia may be bewildered by papers on the structural and functional properties of various neurotransmitters found in the central nervous system. For students confronted with this sort of problem, the use of secondary sources (including the advice of the instructor) is not only permissible but advisable, even before the exact paper topic has been selected. Secondary sources may be particularly valuable in defining the broad goals of a particular type of research and in providing the background information regarding observations, methodology, and technical vocabulary required for understanding the primary literature. As in other disciplines, however, consulting secondary sources in the natural sciences may

limit one's own thinking on a subject of inquiry. Scholarly articles are written by experts who have studied an area for many years and have achieved an understanding of the issue that will almost certainly exceed what can be attained by an undergraduate in only a few semesters or years of study.

Perhaps the best solution to the conflict of reasons for and against the use of secondary sources is to use the secondary sources for some kinds of information but not for others. Use them to acquire background information and views on the broad issues on which the research bears. This should make it possible for you to read and evaluate for yourself the primary materials.

C. Computers and Electronic Text

Because of their easy reproducibility and modification, computer-generated texts require special care and consideration. If, for example, you must examine carefully your indebtedness in paraphrasing the written work of others, new and often subtle questions of indebtedness—and how to acknowledge it—arise when the contents or the format of another's electronic text is shared. Students have claimed before the Academic Panel that they did not consider an electronic file, because of its nature, to be property as "personal" as a book or paper. Students who allow others access to their computer files have unwittingly become party to an illegal collaboration. You should not allow other students access to your computer files or materials. Loaning disks indiscriminately can result in material being used by a third party without the knowledge or permission of the original author of the work. The college considers computer-generated text to be equivalent to any other form of written work; the same restrictions regarding proper attribution that apply to printed texts also cover computer programs, disks and other electronically stored materials.

With the rapid growth of information on the Internet, students are increasingly using this resource in their research, and these sources must be properly acknowledged. In addition to the author's identity and the title of the work cited, correct attribution also includes the www address, the date it was accessed, and the date which the source was first published. As with all attribution, various disciplines may stipulate different forms for presenting this information, so students should consult their instructors. The Vassar Library also maintains a www page entitled "Style Sheet for Citing Electronic Information" which students are encouraged to consult (<http://iberia.vassar.edu/vcl/Quick-Guides/electcit.html>; 4/2/03). If a cited www page is likely to be in a state of flux, students might also find it prudent to download

and save it to an electronic file or print a copy for future reference.

Aside from questions of attribution, students should also understand that the quality of internet-based sites is highly variable, ranging from peer-reviewed electronic journals and books on the high end, to blatant advocacy and uninformed ranting on the low end. Remember, anyone can and often does put content on the internet. Students would be well advised to consult with their instructors about the quality of particular internet sites if they have any concerns regarding the quality of their content.

D. Some “Tips” from Student Members of the Academic Panel

The little essays included thus far in this pamphlet have given you much to think about and several ways to approach the questions raised in them. However, the student members of the Academic Panel have drawn on their extensive experience to suggest some points to remember, presented in a shorter, less speculative form.

Quotations

When using ANY exact words of another, it is imperative to enclose them in quotation marks and to provide the proper citation.

Paraphrasing

When translating someone else’s thoughts into your own language, regardless of how many synonyms you use, YOU MUST FOOTNOTE.

Originality of Information

If an idea is not entirely your own, you MUST use a footnote. At the end of each sentence, ask yourself if you could have had that thought without the aid of one of your sources. It is best to err on the side of citation.

But What if My Paper Looks Like One Giant Footnote?

You learn from reading books; footnotes prove that you have done this. Do not fear them; they are your friends. An expert’s opinion can add legitimacy to your argument.

Context

Keeping in mind that others’ words can validate your own, it is essential not to misrepresent an author in order to prove your thesis.

Common Knowledge

Certain information is considered common knowledge and does not require citation. This includes facts which NEVER vary, like the dates and locations of historical events.

Collaboration

Often someone will have a paper on the same topic as yours, so it is important to keep certain guidelines in mind before soliciting help. Group learning can benefit all those involved, but only if you have already formulated a thesis and thought about your arguments. Going to others to provide the basis for your material is in essence stealing their ideas. While this may make your life easier, it defeats the learning process and it's dishonest. Study first; THEN collaborate.

E. Some Special Advice on the Forms of Attribution

Those responsible for composing this pamphlet felt it would be inappropriate to be thoroughly specific in recommending forms of attribution for two reasons. In some disciplines the forms are very carefully and completely set forth in readily available handbooks. In others there is disagreement about the proper forms, and therefore the demands of the individual paper and the individual instructor ought to take precedence over all other advice. Based on your experience in various courses you may want to add pages to this section of the pamphlet. It is probably a good idea to secure a copy of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1988) or Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987). These two guides are the ones most frequently referred to in the humanities and the social sciences. (For the preferred guides in a number of other fields see pp. 201-02 of the *MLA Handbook*.) Nevertheless special problems will arise, and although we have some specific advice contributed by certain departments, it is always best to check with your teacher to find out which form of attribution she or he deems most appropriate.

Anthropology:

Most anthropological and sociological texts have to bring together complex references to ethnographic material, theoretical positions, influences from other disciplines, and archival matter. For this reason, it is usually best to

include bibliographical references in the text, rather than to collect them together in composite footnotes. Although the following examples illustrate one way of presenting in-text citations and end-of-text references, you will find minor variations on this pattern as you move from one periodical to the next. Folklore periodicals generally adhere to the *MLA Handbook*, again with some slight differences in punctuation. The important thing is to be consistent. Choose the style most suited, in your view, to the subject and materials of your paper, unless specifically told otherwise by your instructor. Do not use more than one style within the same paper, as the result can only be confusing for your readers. When you refer to field material which you have collected yourself, *indicate that this is the case*. One way of doing so is to write (Bloggs, 1974) in the text, and insert the following in your bibliography:

Bloggs, James A
1974 Fieldwork notes from The Retreat, Vassar College,
collected during the months January through May

Or you can put something to this effect in the body of your text, as long as doing so does not break the flow of your argument. When referring to information personally conveyed to you by an instructor, colleague, or outside person, the appropriate format is: (Matthew Vassar, 1886, personal communication). Do not hesitate to acknowledge such personal additions to your stock of knowledge; they are evidence that you have kept up a continuous interest in your topic, and your recognition of them is the best possible evidence for your academic integrity. Field informants, however, should be protected by the use of pseudonyms. You may acknowledge their contribution in general terms, and indeed this is appropriate, but you should only name them if you can show that doing so would neither harm nor offend them. Here, the distinction between plagiarism and field work ethics is quite clear, as long as you do point out that your information comes from informants rather than from your own personal observations. The difference between what people say about their social values and what the observer actually perceives is itself an important one in all anthropological and sociological analyses, and you should make sure that it is clearly described in your ethnographic writing.

Biology and Chemistry:

Science papers commonly avoid the use of quotations. All references given in the text must be listed, usually alphabetically by author, in the Reference section at the

end of the paper. Absolute accuracy is essential in quoting or paraphrasing another author. Always read the original reference. Be objective and impartial when interpreting data, statements, or conclusions of the cited author. When paraphrasing, respect the intent of the author you are citing. The following manuals are recommended to science students as aids in writing a paper:

American Chemical Society. *Handbook for Authors*. Washington, DC: American Chemical Society Publications; 1978.

American Institute of Physics. *Style Manual*. New York: American Institute of Physics; 1978.

Council of Biology Editors Style Manual, 4th ed. Arlington, VA: Council of Biology Editors, Inc.; 1978.

Day, Robert A. *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*. Philadelphia: ISI Press; 1979.

English:

The *MLA Handbook* is the definitive guide for the proper forms of attribution in English studies. Many of the papers you will write in English courses, especially in your freshman year, will be exercises that involve citation of one text only. In these cases, it is probably best to incorporate all citations after the first one into the text. Thus you might begin a paper in the following way: When the lights of the bazaar are extinguished and he has failed in his quest, the narrator of Joyce's story "Araby" tells us, "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger."⁸ I was not very surprised by the narrator's account of himself in the end because I remembered how intolerantly he had viewed his childhood fancies earlier in the story when he said, "What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening!" (32). Pay particular attention to sections 2.6 and 5.3-5.4 of the *Handbook* where the rules for including and punctuating quotations are given in full. Section 5.8.4 is devoted to proper footnote form.

History:

"A critical reader will not accept your opinion or version of events without knowing the evidence upon which it is based. As you do historical writing, you might think of

⁸ James Joyce, "Araby," in *Dubliners* (1916; rpt New York: Viking Press, 1968), p. 35. All further references to this book appear in the text of my paper.

yourself as a lawyer presenting a case in court. Your footnotes are the witnesses which, you hope, will convince a skeptical jury that your case is sound and your conclusions valid.”⁹ For correct footnote and bibliographical forms for History papers see: Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Univ. of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1987). When you quote or cite in the main body of your paper a primary or secondary source which you have not read in the original but which you obtained from another source, you must indicate this in your footnote. For example, in your paper you might write: Cholera was a shock disease, for it could strike and suddenly kill even the apparently healthy; as the *Methodist Magazine* commented in 1832:

To see a number of our fellow creatures, in a good state of health, in the full possession of their wonted strength, and in the midst of their years, suddenly seized with the most violent spasms, and in a few hours cast into the tomb, is calculated to shake the firmest nerves, and to inspire dread in the stoutest heart ¹⁰.

The correct footnote acknowledges that R.J. Morris first unearthed the quotation from the *Methodist Magazine*.

Very often you will find that when you come to write your paper, considerable reading, represented no doubt by industrious note-taking, will often be condensed into a single sentence rather than elaborated in a paragraph or more. Thus you might write: After considerable organized pressure by both the Social Science Association and the British Medical Association throughout the early 1860's, the government finally appointed a Royal Commission of inquiry into the sanitary state of England.¹¹ Your footnote indicates the thoroughness of research on which this single sentence rests and also indicates to your reader that while it is not relevant to your argument or thesis to go into the “organized pressure,” the phrase is both apt and valid.

Political Science:

In most cases political science research is documented by the use of either of two standard systems of notation. One is to provide a brief citation of author, date, and page number in the body of the text with the complete reference in the

⁹ James D. Bennett and Lowell H. Harrison, *Writing History Papers* (St Louis: Forum Press, 1979), p. 37.

¹⁰ *Methodist Magazine*, 1832 p. 449, quoted [or cited] in R.J. Morris, Cholera, 1832: *The Social Response to an Epidemic*, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976), p. 16.

¹¹ For a splendid analysis of the Social Science Association and the British Medical Association and their role in pressuring the government into action see the introduction by M.W. Flinn to A.P. Stewart and E. Jenkins, *The Medical and Legal Aspects of Sanitary Reform*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969), especially pp. 20-23.

list of all references at the end of the paper. This system is in common use in Anthropology, Sociology, Economics, and the more behaviorally oriented work in Political Science. An example follows:

The overwhelming victory of the Congress Party in the 1972 elections coupled with the internal party splits which prevented the implementation of the Congress election pledge to attack poverty highlight what Francine Frankel has called "a paradox of India's political development" (Frankel, 1978: 478).

At the end of your paper, you would provide the full bibliographic data as follows:

References:

Frankel, Francine R.

1978 *India's Political Economy, 1947-1977: The Gradual Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press

The second standard system of notation in political science is the traditional method of footnoting spelled out in detail in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987). Most political scientists accept either system, and some political science books and journals use the first while others employ the second. If your instructor has a strong preference, he or she will inform you of it. On infrequent occasions, you may need a specialized system of notation for work which is primarily in the legal field. It is provided in *A Uniform System of Citation* (Cambridge: Harvard Law Review Association). The frequent use of documents published by the U.S. or foreign governments or by the United Nations may prove troublesome. Correct forms are indicated in Turabian, but government publications may raise difficulties for those using citations within the text. If you cannot generalize from the model above, consult your instructor.

Psychology:

The reference style for Psychology is suited to this discipline's place somewhere between the Physical Sciences and the Humanities. Unlike writers in History and English, psychologists do not use footnotes; instead they cite their sources in the texts of their papers. In contrast to the style of medicine and most physical sciences (e.g., that of the journal *Science*), psychologists' textual citations are more than numbers referring to a reference list; they include the source's author and date of publication. As is the case in many social sciences, papers in psychology conclude with a list of works cited in the paper's text, arranged alphabetically by author.

While psychological style may be initially difficult to learn, it allows the reader of a psychology paper to quickly see the context of each idea that has been cited, and also provides the reader with a single, alphabetized list of sources for further study. These two features are well suited to the contextually determined nature of psychological knowledge, and to the field's frequent production of long, "state-of-the-art" review articles and massive textbooks. To illustrate the unique features of psychological reference style, consider a single statement referenced in the styles of psychology, the humanities, and the physical sciences:

Citations in Psychology

Text:

For social scientists, of equal importance as academic training is field experience with a variety of relevant populations (Lee, 1978).

Reference: (in alphabetically ordered list)

Lee, A.M. *Sociology for Whom?* New York: Oxford University Press, 1978

Citations in the Humanities

Text:

For social scientists, of equal importance as academic training is field experience with a variety of relevant populations.¹

Footnote:

¹ Alfred M. Lee, *Sociology for Whom?* (New York: Oxford Univ Press, 1978), p. 13.

Citations in the Physical Sciences

Text:

For social scientists, of equal importance as academic training is field experience with a variety of relevant populations (1).

Reference:

1. Lee A.M. 1978. *Sociology for Whom?* New York: Oxford University Press, p. 13.

The final authority on psychological style is the *Second Edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, copies of which are in the library. The Department of Psychology has produced a handout that summarizes the basic features of the *Manual's* first edition, and also contains a listing of principles of academic honesty. Copies of this handout, "Integrity of Papers," are available from the Secretary of the Psychology Department, in Blodgett Hall.