6. The Ethical Use of Information

When you enter William & Mary, you become a member of a scholarly community that extends across the campus and beyond to the universe of all scholars. The William & Mary Honor Code addresses the ethical use of information, and the College takes this issue very seriously. As a member of the global community of scholars, you will be expected to abide by established rules of practice, including the rules for how you make use of your information sources.

With so much information available to you, and so easy to find and use, it's easy to forget that information has value. Whoever creates information has an authorship interest in their intellectual property. When you use information, you need to acknowledge and credit the author.

Scholars acknowledge authorship for good reasons. First, it's important to distinguish between your ideas and the ideas you're using from other people. Also, when you give credit to or cite your information sources, you're providing your audience with a kind of roadmap that allows them to find the works you cited in case they want to follow up on their own.

Learning how and when to cite information, and how to present your sources in one of the academic citation styles, is part of your responsibility as a scholar. You might not feel comfortable yet thinking of yourself as a scholar. Still, as you find and use other people's work, you're expected to acknowledge that their information has value and to follow proper scholarly procedures.

One way to think about using information ethically is to imagine scholarship as an ongoing conversation you're having with other authors — dead and alive! Kenneth Burke, in his work The Philosophy of Literary Form, uses this metaphor:

You arrive at a party and find your friends in a heated discussion. They can't take the time to catch you up on the backstory, so you listen, taking in the ideas, until you feel ready to participate. Your voice becomes one of many opinions offered and argued. After a while you leave, and the discussion continues.

Like the Kenneth Burke example, when you conduct research and communicate your conclusions, you enter into an intellectual conversation, one that started before you arrived. Your information sources are the other voices that need to be acknowledged for their contributions to your argument.
When you have questions about the ethical use of information (and you will), remember that you have support. Talk to your:

- Professor
- Research librarians
- The Writing Resources Center

### 6.1 Cite Your Information Sources

You only need to cite information sources that you actually use in your project. That includes material that you quote directly, indirectly, and summarize as part of your argument.

But it's hard to know when you're starting your project exactly which information sources you'll end up using. Planning ahead can make your job a lot easier in the long run:

1. **Ask your professor which citation style to use.** Different academic disciplines have developed different citation styles and formats. These capture pretty much the same kind of information – but do have some variations. If you know the citation style when you start, you can make sure you collect all the citation elements you need.

2. As you consult information sources, **take careful notes** and include all the necessary bibliographic elements (authors, title, edition, page numbers, etc.).

3. **As you collect useful information**, make sure you keep track of direct quotations, paraphrases/summaries, and your own ideas so you can assign the proper citations.

Some conventions govern citations, and you might find some things confusing until you gain experience in this area. For example, if something is common knowledge there's no need to cite your source.

For example:

The statement:

"Sacramento is the state capital of California."

*Is accepted fact, and no citation is needed.*

The statement:

"Sacramento is the cultural capital of California."

*Implies a judgment, and needs a supporting citation or argument.*
With practice and experience, you'll become more skilled at integrating information sources into your project and citing your sources properly.

Let's take a quick look at three ways you might incorporate an information source into your project:

**You can Quote Directly.** For example, The biochemist Albert Szent-Gyorgyi once said, "Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought."

**You can Quote Indirectly.** For example, The biochemist Albert Szent-Gyorgyi once said that the purpose of research is to examine what others have already seen and, as a result, think about it new ways.

**You can also Summarize.** For example, The biochemist Albert Szent-Gyorgyi noted that while other people might have looked into a particular area, it's still possible for fresh eyes to obtain new insights. Indeed, he suggested that is the underlying purpose of research.

In each of these examples you're presenting the main idea in slightly different ways. But the underlying idea belongs to someone else – not you – and you acknowledge their authorship by citing where you located the idea.

And finally, here are some example citations. In these cases we're using the American Psychological Association or APA style for citing information sources:


This citation provides bibliographic information for a scholarly journal article.


This citation provides bibliographic information for a book.

Note that citations do not include any descriptive or summary information about the item.
6.2 Plagiarism

The word *plagiarism* comes from Latin *plagiarius*, which means *kidnapper*.

A standard modern definition is, taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as your own. This is cheating in a fundamentally dishonest way. It's harmful to your reputation and carries potentially severe sanctions.

The W&M Honor Code defines plagiarism as “the presentation, with intent to deceive, or with disregard for *proper scholarly procedures* of a significant scope of any information, ideas or phrasing of another as if they were one’s own without giving appropriate credit to the original source”

You can find the full Honor Code in the Student Handbook.

No one comes to college to cheat!

Carefully citing your information sources will make it clear where the ideas come from and avoid plagiarism. If you have any questions about this area, ask:

- Your professor
- Research librarians
- The Writing Resources Center

6.3 Citation Tools

Some good services are available to capture and manage citations and generate bibliographies. EasyBib or CitationMachine are popular examples. Zotero and Mendeley are also popular due to their ease of use, rich feature set, and low- or no-cost access.

The library subscribes to one such service: **RefWorks**. You can access RefWorks from the Swem Library homepage. Log in with your William & Mary username and password, set up your free RefWorks account, and you’re all set. Next time you can just sign in with your William & Mary credentials.

RefWorks integrates very well with the library’s online catalog, the Summon feature, and many databases. That means that when you find an item in any of those resources, you can simply mark it and export its bibliographic information to your RefWorks account. Once the citation is in RefWorks, you can edit it, add notes, upload the full text of the item if you have it, combine it with others in folders you’ve set up, and, of course, generate bibliographies in almost any citation style, including the MLA, APA, and Chicago styles.
Although we’ve just barely touched on RefWorks here, it’s pretty easy to start using and exploring this service on your own. Feel free to ask a research librarian for help if you have any problems. RefWorks also has some pretty good tutorials that you can watch anytime.

6.4 Copyright, Fair Use, Open Licenses

Copyright is a Federal law that basically says, authors who create new works like songs, photographs, films, books, and scholarship have exclusive control over how their works are copied, altered, performed, or distributed. Infringing copyright is not the same as committing plagiarism. Plagiarism is a violation of scholarly practices that occurs when you claim someone else’s ideas or works as your own. Copyright infringement happens when you violate an author’s exclusive rights over their copyrighted work.

Here are a few of examples to illustrate how copyright works:

You can buy a used copy of Toni Morrison’s novel Beloved as a course text, but you’re not allowed to make copies to sell or share without infringing copyright.

If a musician wants to use a sample from another artist’s song, she must pay a licensing fee to the copyright owner to use it.

If a student organization wants to show Guardians of the Galaxy at one of their student-run events, it must pay a public performance right in order to show the film – even if the group is not charging for tickets.

Sometimes authors want people to reuse their work under certain circumstances, and they will specify open licenses, like Creative Commons, to let you know how you can use their works without asking.

There are also exceptions in the law that let you use someone’s copyrighted work in certain circumstances. One of the most frequent circumstances is Fair Use.

You, as a student, will have the opportunity to create quite a bit of original content in college—everything from papers and essays to music, presentations, and visual artwork. Your content, by default, is protected by copyright. Unless you say otherwise, no one can use your work without your permission.
Fair Use

In certain cases, it’s acceptable to use other people’s copyrighted works without getting their permission. In these cases, the doctrine of Fair Use applies. Fair Use has particular importance to students and faculty.

When weighing whether you should ask permission to use a copyrighted work or whether your use would be protected by Fair Use (and, thus, you wouldn’t have to ask permission), you should consider four factors:

1. Is the purpose and character of the use of a noncommercial nature or for nonprofit educational purposes?

2. What is the nature of the copyrighted work?

3. How much and how substantially of the copyrighted work are you using in relation to the whole?

4. What effect will your use have on the potential market for, or value, of the copyrighted work?

One example of Fair Use that you might be familiar with is the video on YouTube titled Buffy vs. Edward. The clips from both the Twilight films and Buffy the Vampire Slayer are copyrighted, but Jonathan McIntosh relied on Fair Use to make his video.

We can tell it is a Fair Use based on the four factors:

1. The purpose of his use is make a critical commentary on the vampire characters of Edward and Buffy. This weighs in favor of Fair Use.

2. The copyright works are creative, so this actually weighs slightly against Fair Use.

3. McIntosh only used short clips of the copyrighted works, and he didn’t use more than he needed to make his critical analysis. This weighs in favor of Fair Use.

4. No one would watch McIntosh’s video instead of renting Buffy the Vampire Slayer or Twilight. Because the new video is not a substitute for the original works, it doesn’t harm the market, and that weighs in favor of Fair Use.

Even though the second factor isn’t in favor of Fair Use, the other three are, which means that we can rely on this video as a Fair Use. However, there is no way to know 100 percent when a use is fair: the four factors are not straightforward. This might make Fair Use seem scary, but your librarians are
here to help. They can help you think through your projects so that you can decide if your use is a Fair Use.

If you determine that your use is not fair, a librarian can help you find material that has an open license, like Creative Commons, that you can use instead.

**Open Licenses**

Now that so much information is available online, open licenses have become a popular way for authors and creators to describe approved uses for their copyrighted works. Groups like Creative Commons, Open Source Initiative, and the Free Software Foundation have helped to create open licenses that can be used online. Often, open licenses will allow you to reuse material without having to rely on legal exceptions like Fair Use.

Open licenses often let you know if the author requires attribution on reuses, whether the copyrighted work can be reused in a new work, and whether or not that new work can be sold commercially.

Let’s look at a Creative Commons example:

You have been asked to make a documentary film for a class project. You would like to post your final project on YouTube. You are so confident in the quality of your project that you are hoping to make some money selling ads.

You can look for music at the Free Music Archive that would allow you to do that. Any music with an **Attribution-only creative commons license** could be used in your film. If you found a track you really liked that had an **Attribution Non-Commercial license**, you would need to contact the copyright owner to see if you could use it in your commercial YouTube video.

Works with Creative Commons licenses are often labeled on the Internet. You can apply Creative Commons licenses to your own works, if you like.

To learn more about Creative Commons, visit creativecommons.org.
7. Assistance and More Resources

7.1 Swem Library Website

Throughout these lessons, you've been introduced to various parts of the Swem Library homepage and website. Here we'll touch briefly on a few other parts of the homepage and website. For example, on the library homepage, you can:

- Check the library’s hours
- Reserve a study room or a work space in the Media Center
- Get research help
- Find online subject guides created by William & Mary librarians and archivists
- Apply for a job in the library
- Connect with the library on social media
- Learn about other William & Mary libraries

These are just a few examples of services and information you can access on the library website. Feel free to visit and explore the site as often and as extensively as you like. It's always available at swem.wm.edu. And with your William & Mary username and password, you have full access to all the library's resources.

7.2 Swem Library Research Desk and Library Consultations

Need help with library research? The front line for research assistance is the Research desk located on the first floor of Swem. Staffed by professional research librarians and trained graduate students, the research desk is open most hours that the library is open. Just walk up to the desk and ask for help. You can also ask for help using:

- Email
- Instant Message
- Or by phone or text
Regardless of how you contact the research desk, you’ll get timely, friendly, and thorough help. No question is too small or too big, and you can ask for help as often as you like.

If you think you’ll need more extensive, in-depth research assistance, you may want to consider making an appointment for a consultation with a librarian. You can request an appointment on the library website. You’ll be paired up with a librarian with knowledge of your subject area. The librarian will come to your appointment with suggested resources and guidance for your search. Research consultations typically last from thirty minutes to an hour. You can meet with the librarian as many times as you need to.

7.3 Reeder Media Center

The Reeder Media Center, located on the Ground Floor of Swem Library, is the creative heart of the library. The center is a comfortable, flexible, generative, exploratory space. Come with an idea for any kind of multimedia project and, in the Media Center, your idea can come to life.

You can borrow high-definition video cameras, digital cameras, audio recording equipment, lighting kits, and more from the Media Center. Staff will teach you how to use the equipment, if you need help.

The center’s Media Lab has 9 workstations and two restaurant-style collaboration booths, along with the Media Center service desk. You can reserve the workstations and collaboration booths online.

Nearby is a suite of 8 sound-isolating editing and production studios, all of which are equipped with audio, video, and image-editing software. You can reserve a studio online. Media Center staff members will be happy to help you get set up, and give you tips for how to make the most of your editing and production time in the studios.

7.4 Lynda.com

Lynda.com is a database of thousands of video courses and tutorials through which you can learn many valuable skills that will help you in college, in the workplace, and in life. The lessons range from how to use multimedia editing software like Photoshop, Final Cut Pro, and Logic Pro to how to write, speak, and present effectively – and everything in between. The courses and tutorials are written for all skill levels, from beginner to expert.

Access Lynda.com and browse as many courses and lessons as you like. Apply the skills you learn through Lynda.com to your projects at William & Mary, and you’ll end up with a varied and creative portfolio of work.
One important note: Even though the name of the database is Lynda.com, as with any of the College’s databases, you’ll want to access it through the library website in order to be authenticated as a William & Mary user. First go to swem.wm.edu, click on the Library Databases link, and make your way to Lynda.com under the L databases.