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The Kidnapping of Content

By Sam Vaknin

<http://www.plagiarism.org> and <http://www.Turnitin.com>

Latin kidnapped the word "plagion" from ancient Greek and it ended up in English as "plagiarism". It literally means "to kidnap" – most commonly, to misappropriate content and wrongly attribute it to oneself. It is a close kin of piracy. But while the software or content pirate does not bother to hide or alter the identity of the content's creator or the software's author – the plagiarist does. Plagiarism is, therefore, more pernicious than piracy.

Enter Turnit.com. An off-shoot of www.iparadigms.com, it was established by a group of concerned (and commercially minded) scientists from UC Berkeley.

Whereas digital rights and asset management systems are geared to prevent piracy – [plagiarism.org](http://www.plagiarism.org) and its commercial arm, [Turnit.com](http://www.Turnit.com), are the cyber equivalent of a law enforcement agency, acting after the fact to discover the culprits and uncover their misdeeds. This, they claim, is a first stage on the way to a plagiarism-free Internet-based academic community of both teachers and students, in which the educational potential of the Internet can be fully realized.

The problem is especially severe in academia. Various surveys have discovered that a staggering 80%(!) of US students cheat and that at least 30% plagiarize written material. The Internet only exacerbated this problem. More than 200 cheat-sites have sprung up, with thousands of papers available on-line and tens of thousands of satisfied plagiarists the world over. Some of these hubs – like cheater.com, cheatweb.com or cheathouse.com – make no bones about their offerings. Many of them are located outside the USA (in Germany, or Asia) and at least one offers papers in a few languages, Hebrew included.

The problem, though, is not limited to the ivory towers. E-zines plagiarize. The print media plagiarize. Individual journalists plagiarize, many with abandon. Even advertising agencies and financial institutions plagiarize. The amount of material out there is so overwhelming that the plagiarist develops a (fairly justified) sense of immunity. The temptation is irresistible, the rewards big and the pressures of modern life great.

The Kidnapping of Content

Some of the plagiarists are straightforward copiers. Others substitute words, add sentences, or combine two or more sources. This raises the question: "when should content be considered original and when – plagiarized?". Should the test for plagiarism be more stringent than the one applied by the Copyright Office? And what rights are implicitly granted by the material's genuine authors or publishers once they place the content on the Internet? Is the Web a public domain and, if yes, to what extent? These questions are not easily answered. Consider reports generated by users from a database. Are these reports copyrighted – and if so, by whom – by the database compiler or by the user who defined the parameters, without which the reports in question would have never been generated? What about "fair use" of text and works of art? In the USA, the backlash against digital content piracy and plagiarism has reached preposterous legal, litigious and technological nadirs.

Plagiarism.org has developed a statistics-based technology (the "Document Source Analysis") which creates a "digital fingerprint" of every document in its database. Web crawlers are then unleashed to scour the Internet and find documents with the same fingerprint and a colour-coded report is generated. An instructor, teacher, or professor can then use the report to prove plagiarism and cheating.

Piracy is often considered to be a form of viral marketing (even by software developers and publishers). The author's, publisher's, or software house's data are preserved intact in the cracked copy. Pirated copies of e-books often contribute to increased sales of the print versions. Crippled versions of software or pirated copies of software without its manuals, updates and support – often lead to the purchase of a licence. Not so with plagiarism. The identities of the author, editor, publisher and illustrator are deleted and replaced by the details of the plagiarist. And while piracy is discussed freely and fought vigorously – the discussion of plagiarism is still taboo and actively suppressed by image-conscious and endowment-weary academic institutions and media. It is an uphill struggle but plagiarism.org has taken the first resolute step.

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How Business Travellers Can Stay Safe in the Worlds Hotspots

By John Williams

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"How Business Travellers Can Stay Safe in the Worlds

Hotspots"

– by John Williams

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Business travellers increasingly find themselves needing to visit hotspots. Outside Europe and America, many countries need special care. Obviously, Iraq wouldn't be the number one choice for a business trip. But other countries, like Saudi Arabia or parts of the Far East, require attention too.

Horrific stories of kidnapping and murder scare anyone planning to visit a hotspot. But what are the real risks ? And what can you do to minimize those risks ?

Let's make a list, and discuss each in turn.

- * Kidnapping
- * Attack
- * Robbery
- * Accident

It's reassuring to discover few travellers fall victim to kidnapping. Kidnap victims are usually local people or resident expatriates. Why ? Probably because travellers are unpredictable. Kidnappers don't know their plans, where they're staying, or even that they're there at all !

Random attacks are much more likely, but the risk of these can be much minimized, as we'll discuss later.

Robbery – theft of possessions and money can be common among travellers. But these risks can also be minimized.

The biggest threat to business travellers comes from accidents. The number of road accidents, in particular, far exceeds any deaths in terrorist incidents.

How to minimize risk

Reduce your risk by good preparation. Learn about the

country and city you plan to visit. A number of websites will help your research. The U.S State Department runs a website at <http://travel.state.gov/travel/> The British Foreign Office maintains a website at www.fco.gov.uk – you can find constantly updated general and country specific travel advice.

If you get advice, follow it. Don't ignore it. Keep a low profile where possible, and don't draw unfavourable attention. Is that a good neighbourhood you plan to walk around ? How about that quaint little bar ? Maybe it's the local criminal hangout ?

Find out what you can before you leave, and then take local advice when you get there. Chat with your taxi driver and your hotel manager. You'll find out 99% of what you need to know from these two guys !

So, before you go you've already found out about good and bad areas of town. You've learned enough to book a good hotel in a good area. Then you'll fill in more detail when you get there (manager, taxi driver etc.)

But what if things go wrong ?

Okay, you've taken steps to reduce your risk. But accidents sometimes happen. You might get robbed in broad daylight on a busy street, though it's unlikely.

Get proper insurance. Standard travel insurance covers most situations, and you should check with your broker. Not all insurance covers business travel, so check. In some higher risk countries, you might need specialist insurance. Yes, you can get insurance to cover emergency evacuation, or even payment to skilled negotiators to help secure your release.

But you only need insurance when it's already too late. Make contingency plans to get yourself out of a bad

situation. You've got backup plans for your computer systems and other business operations. Make backup plans for yourself.

If you get caught in political disruption or natural

disaster, what will you do ? Communication usually disappears first. Buy or borrow a mobile phone that works locally. Take your own tri-band phone, or rent a phone locally at the airport. Make sure you've got a local contact who can get messages back if necessary (agree this in advance).

So there's little need to worry about the more horrific incidents we see on T.V every day. But more mundane risks, such as robbery or attack can be minimized by the right preparation. Use the internet to research where you're going, and use the U.S and U.K Government web sites for up-to-date advice.

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