**PLAGIARISM, FABRICATION, AND ETHICAL VIOLATIONS IN JOURNALISM**

**CASE STUDIES**

EXAMPLES:

From the American Journalism Review (June 2003), “The Jayson Blair Affair: Can the *New York Times* learn important lessons from its plagiarism/fabrication scandal?,” by Rem Rieder: “We've been here before. Too often. There was Ruth Shalit, the young *New Republic* writer who was Washington journalism's It Girl in the mid-'90s, until she imploded with a couple of high-profile plagiarism episodes and a powerful but error-riddled assault on the *Washington Post*'s approach to race. Then there was Stephen Glass, also of *The New Republic*, whose stories, packed with amazing, dead-on detail, seemed too good to be true. And were. Glass will long be remembered as the guy who would build a Web site to corroborate his fabrications. Now it's Jayson Blair, the 27-year-old *New York Times* national reporter who destroyed his career in a stunning conflagration of pilfered material, outright fiction and just plain bizarre behavior. ... Once the *San Antonio Express-News* brought a clear-cut case of piracy to its attention, the *Times* unleashed a posse of reporters and editors to put Blair's national desk oeuvre under a microscope. It played the devastating findings of Blair's serial crimes against journalism at the top of page one, with four open pages inside. … . Sadly, unethical journalists will come and go. The critical issue here is the health of our most important news organization.”

ETHICS STATEMENT:

From the Society for Professional Journalists Code of Ethics (1996 revision): “Journalists should … Never plagiarize … Journalists should … Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.”

HOW TO AVOID:

From the Columbia Journalism Review (Feb. 26, 2010), “The Counter-Plagiarism Handbook,” by Craig Silverman: “The two most recent instances of plagiarism both saw the reporters in question claim that they had unintentionally used the work of others. Whether or not you find this a plausible explanation, it’s the most common excuse offered by journalists caught plagiarizing. They rarely, if ever, cop to the offense. So the question becomes how can we help journalists avoid accidental copying? Here’s what I’ve been able to collect in terms of tips and best practices: • ‘Before you start to research, write. In the middle of your research, write. Expressing your own thoughts and using your own words will force your brain to flex the self-expression neurons, rather than the repetition neurons.’ (Via [Poynter](http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=67&aid=178067)) • Keep research separate from writing. Don’t copy-and-paste other people’s words and work into your draft until you’re ready to quote from it. Then… • Use a different font and text color for your research files. This will help you instantly recognize other people’s words when you paste them into your story. (Many people have suggested this over the years. It works.) • Add in the proper attribution as soon as you paste any research into your draft. • Put quotes in “quotes.” Whether taking notes by hand, transcribing an interview, or copying text from another source, always use quotation marks. This helps prevent you from forgetting to add them later. • Live to link. For those producing online content, link as much as possible. This reinforces the act of attribution. For print and broadcast people, stop the silly practice of not crediting competitors. • If it seems clever, check it out. I thought Maureen Dowd had said a line like this, but I Googled it and couldn’t confirm. So let me state clearly that the first sentence of this bullet point may belong to someone else. The idea is straightforward: if you think you’ve come up with a clever or unique sentence or quip, check it out. It’s possible you heard or read it before and forgot. … • Review paraphrased material. The rewrite was/is an art in journalism. But if you get it wrong, you’re a thief. So always check your paraphrased sections against the originals. (Via [eHow](http://www.ehow.com/how_2166275_prevent-plagiarism.html)) • Google it all. Plagiarists are often busted by someone plugging a few sentences or paragraphs into Google. Do the same for yourself. Google large sections of your piece just before submission in order to ensure you haven’t accidentally mislaid a few quotation marks. And use Factiva and/or Lexis-Nexis [or other article databases] if you have access to them.”

THE COST OF PLAGIARISM, FABRICATION, AND RELATED OFFENSES:

* Not only loss of a job, failure of a class, and/or expulsion from school, but also loss of integrity and the public trust on top of harm to democracy and the integrity of our very freedoms.