

“The Fruits of Intellectual Labor”: International Student Views of Intellectual Property

Ilka Datig and Beth Russell

In this paper, we report on the results of a study conducted at New York University Abu Dhabi in the fall of 2013. Our goal in the study was to gain a global college student perspective on issues related to intellectual property, including copyright and plagiarism. We found that, contrary to popular opinion, most of our students have a solid understanding of the nature of intellectual property rights, as interpreted within the North American higher education community. In addition, the majority of our students view violations of intellectual property rights and norms, such as plagiarism, negatively.



There is often an assumption by librarians and educators that college-age students have a disregard for intellectual property rights and copyright law or are oblivious to the concepts entirely. “Millennials” and “digital natives” are assumed to have views of intellectual property that differ from previous generations; they belong to an era in which “remixing” content, borrowing from various media to create something new, is a common activity.¹ According to a 2003 Pew Report on this issue, 56 percent of college graduates report downloading songs without concern for copyright, while 35 percent of full-time students and 28 percent of part-time students admit to sharing files. Eighty percent of these full-time students do not care if the media files they download from the web and share are copyrighted.² Additionally, some educators feel that students from countries with less stringent enforcement policies than those in the United States, and with varying philosophies about individual and collective work, will view these rules differently from American students. For example, Sowden argued that “In many cultures, especially those of Asia, achieving group consensus is more important than demonstrating one’s own understanding and abilities,” which can lead to instances of plagiarism.³

These philosophies, if they are assumed to be “set in stone” and are not constantly reevaluated, can be a barrier to effective teaching of proper research practices by librarians. This is especially true in global communities such as New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), where students come from over 70 different countries and a variety of educational backgrounds. NYUAD is a diverse campus located in the United Arab Emirates and is composed of a multiethnic and multilingual student body from all over

Ilka Datig is Reference & Research Librarian and Beth Russell is Head, Center for Digital Scholarship at New York University Abu Dhabi; e-mails: ilka.datig@nyu.edu and beth.russell@nyu.edu. ©2015 Ilka Datig and Beth Russell, Attribution-NonCommercial (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>) CC BY-NC.

the world. As librarians, we were interested in how these diverse backgrounds and educational experiences influenced our students' opinions of intellectual property and copyright and how, as educators, we can address these issues. In conducting our study, we hoped to uncover more about our students' opinions—with the goal of helping us teach our diverse student body about ethical information use.

In this research, we hope to answer the following questions: How is the nature of intellectual property, with its concurrent ideas of permanent authorship and ownership of information, understood by the multicultural student population at NYUAD? Do our students value ownership of creative works or believe in an open access system that ignores or elides American copyright law and intellectual property beliefs? Do students think rules regarding plagiarism and copyright violations are fair? The authors' goal in this research was to construct a "student-centered" view of intellectual property and copyright on our campus. Ideally, by understanding our students' opinions on these issues, we can improve our teaching and outreach. In addition, because our students represent the global community, our findings should be of interest to many librarians in the United States and abroad.

Review of Selected Literature

Many authors argue that culture and nationality are key components of students' understandings of intellectual property, copyright, and plagiarism. We've included a selected review of the literature on the topic that by no means includes all perspectives or available research. The literature was chosen because we felt it closely reflected our own student population and our study of intellectual property opinions on campus. Unfortunately, much of the literature regarding the cultural aspects of students' understanding of intellectual property was written before 2006.⁴ Also, a good deal of the relevant literature comes from ethics, communications, or educational journals. The library literature, although more recent, is most often concerned with practical considerations such as instruction and outreach for international students.⁵ Given that some of our cited studies were published more than five years ago, along with the swiftly changing nature of this topic, readers may wish to seek out more current research in this field as it is published.

Of particular interest to our study at NYUAD are Fawley's perspectives on regional copyright and intellectual property views in the Arab world. In her research on international students and plagiarism at a global branch campus of Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, she argued: "In traditionally oral Arab culture, the information comes from wisdom, poetry, songs and folk stories, not books. In this respect, information is essentially in the public domain. Repeating someone else's words is part of the oral tradition and is a way of passing information from one generation to the next."⁶ Fawley elaborated by explaining:

Another characteristic of the traditional nomadic Bedouin society is that it is group-oriented; the focus is on the family or tribe, not the individual... Personality traits, such as independent thinking, that did not strengthen the group were not encouraged and were punished; independent needs were subordinate as well. This conflicts with the individual, performance-related goals Western culture prizes.⁷

She continued by stating that "memorizing text in one's native language then does little to prepare a student to think critically."⁸ Therefore, students whose educational system was built on rote memorization might be left at a disadvantage because they are not accustomed to crafting their own ideas and opinions. When asked to suddenly express their own thoughts through an essay or other written work, these students are left in the dark.

An NYUAD faculty member encountered a situation in her classroom that illustrates this example perfectly. After discussing the course text, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, she asked her students for their thoughts on a passage from the book and was greeted with silence. In reflecting on her experience in the classroom in an editorial piece, she wrote, "After I asked my question, a student raised his hand. 'What do you mean,' he asked, 'by "what do you think?"' He explained he'd never been asked 'what do you think' by a teacher. As he spoke, there were nods from other students around the room, as if they, too, thought that it was strange for a teacher to solicit their ideas" (*The National*, 2014).⁹

Research by Juwah, Lal, and Beloucif supported this argument, concluding that, "in Confucian based societies in Asia (China, Japan, Korea, and others), the individual ownership of spoken or written word or ideas is not the norm as is the case in western countries. In those cultures, learning which involves analysis or original thought and deviation from the original text is not highly valued, and the individual may be referred to as being egoistic and non-conformist."¹⁰ Writing about China, Liu argued that "the lack of clear laws for punishing plagiarism as well as the ineffective enforcement of existing laws" contributes to a plagiarism-friendly environment (although she also pointed out that plagiarism is still not considered an acceptable practice).¹¹

Many studies describe students who have copied another's work into their own paper without proper citations, but without meaning any harm or realizing this practice might conflict with academic norms. A study by Erkaya involving Turkish students found that "the participants in the present study...were unaware about plagiarism. During the interview, the senior high school student looked up the meaning of plagiarism in a Turkish dictionary and affirmed that he had never heard the word before in English or in Turkish."¹² Similarly, a study by Deckert of Chinese university students found that "students had little familiarity with the Western notion of plagiarism and poor ability to recognize it."¹³ Sarkodie-Mensah cited a 2007 survey by Boston College geared toward international students and their views on academic integrity issues that further emphasized the belief that international students often unknowingly plagiarize, finding that "the majority of the students indicated that plagiarism was not a big issue in their countries of origin" and that "using words, sentences, and chapters verbatim without acknowledging where they came from was not a criminal deed. After all, the people who engaged in such practice spent many hours in a library and thus must be rewarded for their hard work of discovering additional knowledge."¹⁴

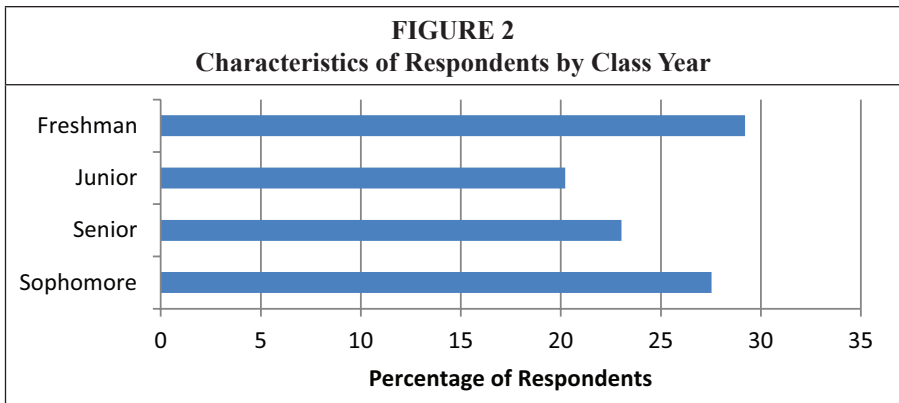
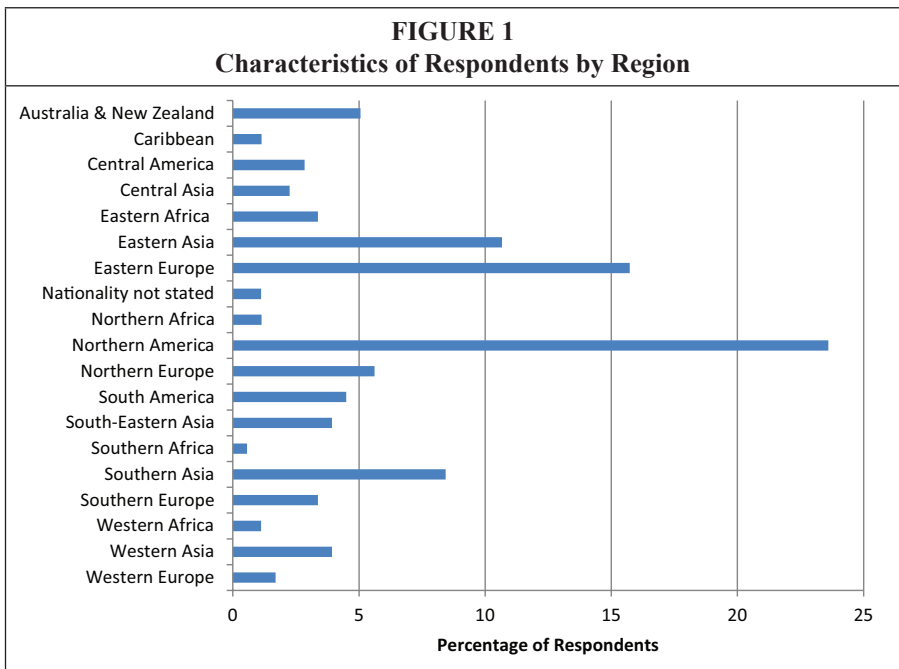
The existing literature makes a strong case for the value in developing a greater understanding of how intellectual property is viewed by students around the world, and our research was aimed toward that goal. Our research diverges from the current body of literature in that we did not focus on what students have done or not done in the past in terms of plagiarism. We were more interested in how they define these issues, as well as how they actually feel about them. Do they think the rules that are applied by Western-style institutions are fair? Do they feel they should be able to copy and paste from the Internet without punishment? Is copyright an outdated concept in this era of sharing, reusing, and remixing? These questions are just as relevant to students from North America and Europe as they are to students from other regions.

Methodology

To approach our research questions, we conducted a mixed-method survey during the fall semester of 2013. Our survey included both open-ended and Likert-scale questions. We created the survey using Qualtrics, a subscription-based survey tool available to us through our institution. We made the survey available to all NYUAD undergraduates who self-identified as being over the age of 18, which was approximately 620 students.

We advertised the survey using the university intranet and the library’s social media outlets. Additionally, we set up tables in the library with computers and refreshments during our busier hours to attract students to take the survey. We offered participating respondents the opportunity to be entered into a raffle for an iPad mini. As this was an online survey, all participating respondents had access to the Internet while taking the survey. We closed the survey after two weeks, at which point we had received 178 complete responses to the survey, approximately a 29 percent response rate.

All survey responses were anonymous. Students could enter their university e-mail address to be entered into the prize raffle, but their e-mail addresses were not linked to their answers. As part of the survey, students were also asked questions about their nationality and their exposure to instruction on intellectual property issues at their secondary schools. In reporting on our findings, we have chosen to group students using the United Nations geoscheme.¹⁵ This was done to ensure that individual stu-



dent responses could not be traced by nationality, given that the NYUAD student population includes single student representatives from some nations. We used Stata, the quantitative analysis software, to analyze our quantitative data. We analyzed the open-ended questions together using a simple and collaborative note-taking system.

Findings

In the survey, we asked students for their nationality, and only two students abstained from answering the question. There was at least one respondent from each region, with the largest numbers coming from Northern America (42), Eastern Europe (28), and Eastern Asia (19). We also asked students for their class year and received a relatively equal distribution. Characteristics of our student respondents are included in figures 1 and 2.

Student Definitions of Intellectual Property

Given that the NYUAD student population is so multicultural, we expected some variation in student definitions of intellectual property. The first question in our survey asked students, "What is intellectual property?" Of the 175 responses, only three students indicated that they had no idea what intellectual property was. The rest attempted to define it, and in the majority of cases, were reasonably successful in doing so. Some representative answers are included here:

[Intellectual property] is the concept of "mind" as a property through creation of artwork, or music, or literature or something of that sort. (Junior, Southern Asia)

[Intellectual property is] the expressed idea, concept, or work created by an individual, group, or organization that is published, distributed, or otherwise made available under a protected framework accrediting the aforementioned party. (Senior, Northern America)

Intellectual property is your thoughts and ideas that are strictly yours—they may have been influenced by another person's thoughts and/or ideas but are clearly original and your own. (Freshman, Northern Europe)

Intellectual property is a work or invention that is the result of creativity, to which the creator(s) of the work has rights and for which the creator(s) may apply for a patent, copyright, trademark, etc. (Senior, Eastern Asia)

Students were divided as to whether or not they thought intellectual property was a physical object or an intangible concept. Some stated that intellectual property results in the creation of a physical object, while others felt it was the intangible creative process that eventually produced a physical object. Students often used iterations of adjectives such as "individual," "creativity," and "original" to describe the term.

[Intellectual property] is property (something that belongs to one person and thus has rights attached to it) that is not physical but related to ideas or concepts. For example, if I think of an idea for a really cool new dating website (ripping off the plot of *The Social Media [sic]* here...) and some computer guy comes along and steals it he has stolen my intellectual property. It is necessary to define intellectual property as it is easily stolen with little proof or evidence as who can claim whose head it came out of? (Sophomore, Northern Europe)

Intellectual property refers to property rights over the creations of the mind. If I buy a microwave it becomes part of my physical property, but the design, characteristics and 'know-how' fall under the intellectual property of the one who designed and invented the microwave. (Sophomore, Southern Europe)

Personal property that is nonexistent in the physical sense, meaning that it can take the form of ideas and plans and other forms of thoughts and concepts. (Senior, South America)

Intellectual property is a product that does not have a physical value. Intellectual property can be a book for example (not the physicality of the book, but the ideas and words in it). (Senior, Eastern Europe)

Intellectual property consists of media, art, text, film, and audio that are recorded by an individual or group of individuals. (Junior, Northern America)

Student Definitions of Copyright

Our second survey question asked the students "What is copyright?" and 175 students answered this question. Many of the students linked the concept of copyright to their definition of intellectual property.

Copyright is a set of laws protecting intellectual property. (Sophomore, Eastern Europe)

Copyright is having the ownership of a brand or idea. For example, Coca Cola has copyright over their logo. I am not allowed to use the logo for any promotional material because I do not own it. (Junior, South America)

Copyright exists to protect intellectual property and to prevent people from taking advantage of the benefits or potential benefits of someone else's ideas. I also like to believe that it protects creativity in that it assures people that no one else can take credit for their ideas, which they may have worked on developing for years. (Junior, South-Eastern Asia)

Others were less clear on exactly what copyright means, but knew that it was related to the ownership of creative works and the protection that copyright law affords.

Copyright is a patent that disallows others from using your ideas. (Freshman, Eastern Asia)

Copyright its [*sic*] when you have your right over your original idea. (Freshman, Central Asia)

Copyright is a way in which the idea/product is given exclusively to the creator. (Sophomore, Eastern Africa)

Development of Knowledge at NYUAD

We were also curious as to whether exposure to a U.S.-based, collegiate academic curriculum had influenced students' views. We asked our students to respond to this open-ended question: "How has your opinion of intellectual property changed over the time you've been at NYUAD, if at all?" The majority of respondents felt like they

had a fairly solid grasp of the concepts prior to coming to NYUAD, mostly because of educational initiatives surrounding these issues at their previous schools. A sample of their responses is included here:

Not much. I have always been very aware of how serious plagiarism is. My high school did a great job teaching me how and when to properly cite and I am very conscious about citation. (Junior, South America)

Nope. High school pounded it in. We had to use “turnitin” and were run through database, APA, and MLA workshops. (Junior, Northern America)

Not too much. If intellectual property is what I think it is (in the context of plagiarism at least), then I think I was fairly well instructed in high school to know what’s best in university. (Junior, Australia & New Zealand)

No, I haven’t. Perhaps what changed was the ways to respect it. (Senior, South America)

Conversely, there were some respondents who indicated a transformation in their views, with some saying that their own intellectual and artistic pursuits, and those of their peers, had made them realize the importance of protecting their creative works. It was no longer a foreign concept that had little “real life” significance.

It has changed greatly because I was involved myself with doing intellectual work and realized the amount of effort it takes to produce something worthy. (Senior, Central Asia)

I’ve become more sensitive to IP than I was during my high school years, given that some of my current friends are musicians who could be directly affected by piracy—and I’ve been more responsible for citing research papers/contributing to academic discussions. (Senior, Northern America)

Student Opinions on Intellectual Property, Copyright and Plagiarism

In the survey we asked students to rate eighteen questions using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). Specifically, they were asked, “Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements,” followed by a list of eighteen questions related to their opinions of copyright, plagiarism, and intellectual property. The full list of student responses is available in table 1. In this section we have organized the responses by the topic of the question. Some of the more interesting responses are visualized in figure 3.

We asked the students three general questions pertaining to copyright and intellectual property. We did not specifically ask them about their views on fair use guidelines, which do allow for limited uses of artistic works in some cases without permission and which may have altered their answers. Their responses show that our students believe that creators of information and artistic works should have some control over their intellectual property. The majority of students agreed: “When I write a research paper, I own that paper for the rest of my life and no one should be allowed to quote from it without giving me credit,” with 60 percent either agreeing or strongly agreeing and an average rating of 2.66. Students were somewhat ambivalent about the effect of copyright laws on creativity, but overall they do not think copyright laws hurt creativity.¹⁶ Students strongly agreed that “The rights of people who create artistic works deserve to be protected.” Fully 86

TABLE 1
Please Indicate to What Extent You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statements:

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|------|----------|--------------------|
| When I write a research paper, I own that paper for the rest of my life and no one should be allowed to quote from it without giving me credit. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 23.6% | 36.5% | 20.2% | 3.93% | 7.30% | 2.81% | 5.62% | 178 | 2.66 | 0.03 | 0.02 |
| Copyright laws hurt creativity. We should be able to freely remix things we find on the Internet or offline. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 3.93% | 8.43% | 19.1% | 13.5% | 21.9% | 24.7% | 8.43% | 178 | 4.49 | 2.62 | 1.62 |
| The rights of people who create artistic works deserve to be protected. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 44.1% | 42.9% | 9.60% | 2.26% | 0.56% | 0.56% | 0.00% | 177 | 1.74 | 0.7 | 0.84 |
| Copying someone else's words into a research paper is a sign of respect. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 4.49% | 6.74% | 8.99% | 26.4% | 16.8% | 21.3% | 15.2% | 178 | 4.69 | 2.69 | 1.64 |
| Most pieces of information in the world have an individual author. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 0.57% | 8.52% | 13.1% | 14.8% | 14.2% | 28.9% | 19.9% | 176 | 5 | 2.63 | 1.62 |

TABLE 1
Please Indicate to What Extent You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statements:

| Authors should receive credit when other people use their words or ideas. | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|------|----------|--------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 47.5% | 35.6% | 11.9% | 3.95% | 0.56% | 0.56% | 0.00% | 177 | 1.76 | 0.84 | 0.92 |
| It is unfair to ask students to cite other people's words and ideas in class assignments. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 0.56% | 0.56% | 5.62% | 8.43% | 10.1% | 38.7% | 35.9% | 178 | 5.87 | 1.53 | 1.24 |
| Anything that I find on the Internet is okay for me to copy directly into my paper without citing. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 0.56% | 1.69% | 2.25% | 6.18% | 5.06% | 26.4% | 57.9% | 178 | 6.24 | 1.44 | 1.2 |
| Plagiarism is a victimless crime. It does not hurt anyone. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 0.56% | 1.12% | 3.93% | 6.74% | 11.2% | 29.8% | 46.6% | 178 | 6.03 | 1.53 | 1.24 |
| Students who are caught plagiarizing should be allowed to redo the assignment without being punished. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 5.06% | 6.18% | 15.2% | 17.9% | 21.3% | 24.7% | 9.55% | 178 | 4.57 | 2.61 | 1.62 |

TABLE 1
Please Indicate to What Extent You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statements:

| Students who copy and paste from the Internet are cheating themselves. | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|------|----------|--------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 27.7% | 31.6% | 22.0% | 12.4% | 1.13% | 2.82% | 2.26% | 177 | 2.45 | 1.92 | 1.39 |
| Students who are caught plagiarizing should be severely punished. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 4.49% | 16.8% | 25.3% | 22.5% | 16.3% | 8.43% | 6.18% | 178 | 3.79 | 2.36 | 1.54 |
| Plagiarism is stealing. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 23.0% | 38.2% | 27.5% | 6.18% | 1.69% | 2.25% | 1.12% | 178 | 2.37 | 1.42 | 1.19 |
| Musicians deserve to make money from the songs they produce. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 28.1% | 49.4% | 15.7% | 4.49% | 1.12% | 1.12% | 0.00% | 178 | 2.04 | 0.9 | 0.95 |
| Movies don't belong to anyone. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 0.00% | 1.69% | 3.93% | 13.5% | 15.2% | 41.6% | 24.2% | 178 | 5.63 | 1.43 | 1.2 |

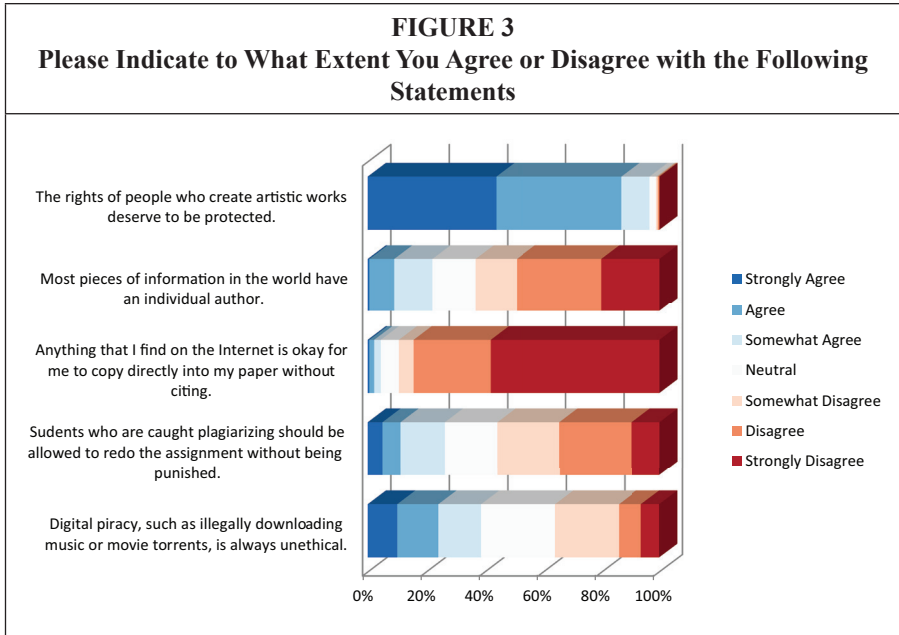
TABLE 1
Please Indicate to What Extent You Agree or Disagree with the Following Statements:

| Digital piracy, such as illegally downloading music or movie torrents, is always unethical. | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|------|----------|--------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 10.1% | 14.0% | 14.6% | 25.3% | 21.9% | 7.87% | 6.18% | 178 | 3.83 | 2.69 | 1.64 |
| When I produce an artistic piece such as a film, performance, screenplay, or musical piece, people who want to use all or part of it should give me credit. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 32.0% | 43.8% | 19.1% | 3.37% | 1.69% | 0.00% | 0.00% | 178 | 1.99 | 0.8 | 0.9 |
| When I produce a work of art, people who want to use all or part of it should ask for my permission and/or give me money. | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strongly Agree | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total Responses | Mean | Variance | Standard Deviation |
| 19.1% | 28.6% | 28.6% | 14.6% | 5.62% | 2.81% | 0.56% | 178 | 2.7 | 1.68 | 1.3 |

percent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, and the average rating was 1.74. In fact, this was one of the strongest and clearest responses of any of the statements.

The survey contained two questions that explicitly mention authorship. We were hoping to gain a greater understanding of how students view authorship, since it plays such a large role in the definitions of copyright and intellectual property. Overall, the students believe that authors should have certain rights over their creations but are unsure as to whether most works are created by single authors. Students clearly agree that authors should receive credit for their words and ideas, with 73 percent either agreeing or strongly agreeing, and a very low average of 1.76. However, students were quite split when considering whether most information in the world has an individual author, although they lean toward disagreement (average 5.0). Figure 3 shows the interesting split in the distribution of their answers. When developing the question, we were trying to ascertain whether students have a collectivist or individualist view of authorship, particularly as outlined by Martin in his article on the effects of individualism and collectivism on rates of plagiarism.¹⁷ However, it is possible that the question was too vague to get a definitive answer.

The survey contained a number of questions about plagiarism. We worded the questions in several different ways to see if the strength of their responses would vary. Overall, student opinions of plagiarism dovetail with the standard definition: the uncredited use of someone else’s words or ideas. They also, almost universally, view plagiarism negatively. The students tend to disagree that copying someone else’s words into their paper is a sign of respect. Students think it is fair for their professors to ask them to cite their sources. In one of the strongest responses, 58 percent of students strongly disagreed that anything on the Internet is acceptable to use in their papers without citation, and the overall average was 6.24. Students strongly agreed that plagiarism is stealing, with 61 percent either agreeing or strongly agreeing.



We also asked several questions about the effects of plagiarism. Their responses show that students view plagiarism as something that has negative effects. Students disagree with the idea that plagiarism is a victimless crime, with the highest proportion (47%) strongly disagreeing. Students believe that plagiarists are cheating themselves, with 60 percent either agreeing or strongly agreeing. Regarding punishment for plagiarism, the students were more ambivalent. Students slightly disagree that plagiarists should be able to redo their assignments without consequences (average 4.57), and tend to agree that plagiarists should be severely punished (3.79).

We asked several questions regarding media, to see if there was any difference in how the students responded between media and writing or literature. As we expected, in comparison to statements about writing, students were more ambivalent on statements about digital piracy and media production. However, when it comes to their own artistic creations, they would like their rights to be recognized. Students strongly agree that musicians should be able to make money from their work. They also agreed that moviemakers have rights over their creations. When it comes to imagining their own artistic productions, students also feel strongly. They believe that people should give them credit if they want to use their artistic work and also that they should be

asked for permission or given money if someone wants to use their work. The most interesting (and split) responses came from this statement: "Digital piracy, such as illegally downloading music or movie torrents, is always unethical." Students were split on this question and the average was 3.83, almost directly in the middle. This was one of the most divisive statements in the survey.

Differences by class year. Using Stata, we were able to analyze whether student responses varied by class year. Overall, the further the students progress, the more likely they are to see plagiarism negatively and to expect their own rights as creators to be respected. We conducted a paired t-test to see which questions had a significant correlation with class year. For the most part, the answers did not correlate to class year, but there were a few exceptions. The exceptions are listed in table 2 with levels of significance and coefficients. We have also included graphs showing average responses by class year for each of these four questions. We can make four statements after looking at these data. As students progress from freshman to senior year, they are: more likely to disagree that all pieces of information in the world have an individual author; more likely to agree that students who plagiarize are cheating themselves; more likely to agree that people who want to use their (the student's) work of art should ask permission and/or give the student money; and more likely to disagree that the rights of people who create artistic works deserve to be protected (however, it should be noted that even seniors tend to agree with this statement, just not as strongly as freshmen).

TABLE 2
Differences by Class Year

| Statement | Class | Mean | SD | Coef. | Sig (p) |
|---|------------|------|-------|-----------|---------|
| Most pieces of information in the world have an individual author. | Freshmen | 4.61 | 1.609 | .2340665 | 0.031 |
| | Sophomores | 5.02 | 1.749 | | |
| | Juniors | 5.08 | 1.592 | | |
| | Seniors | 5.38 | 1.444 | | |
| Students who copy and paste from the Internet are cheating themselves. | Freshmen | 2.78 | 1.501 | -.2272773 | 0.013 |
| | Sophomores | 2.55 | 1.459 | | |
| | Juniors | 2.19 | 1.215 | | |
| | Seniors | 2.10 | 1.216 | | |
| When I produce a work of art, people who want to use all or part of it should ask for my permission and/or give me money. | Freshmen | 3.06 | 1.406 | -.1888889 | 0.028 |
| | Sophomores | 2.65 | 1.332 | | |
| | Juniors | 2.44 | 1.182 | | |
| | Seniors | 2.54 | 1.143 | | |
| The rights of people who create artistic works deserve to be protected. | Freshmen | 1.49 | .642 | .1228894 | 0.028 |
| | Sophomores | 1.88 | .904 | | |
| | Juniors | 1.64 | .723 | | |
| | Seniors | 1.97 | .999 | | |

Correlations are considered significant when (p) < 0.05

Differences by region. One of our original questions, when undertaking this research, was whether or not the students' opinions would vary depending upon their nationalities. We decided to use the United Nations geoscheme because it gave us a fair way of splitting up our respondents by geographical region without having to be concerned about identifying any particular students by their exact countries. We also liked it because it is a little more exact than grouping students by continent, and the

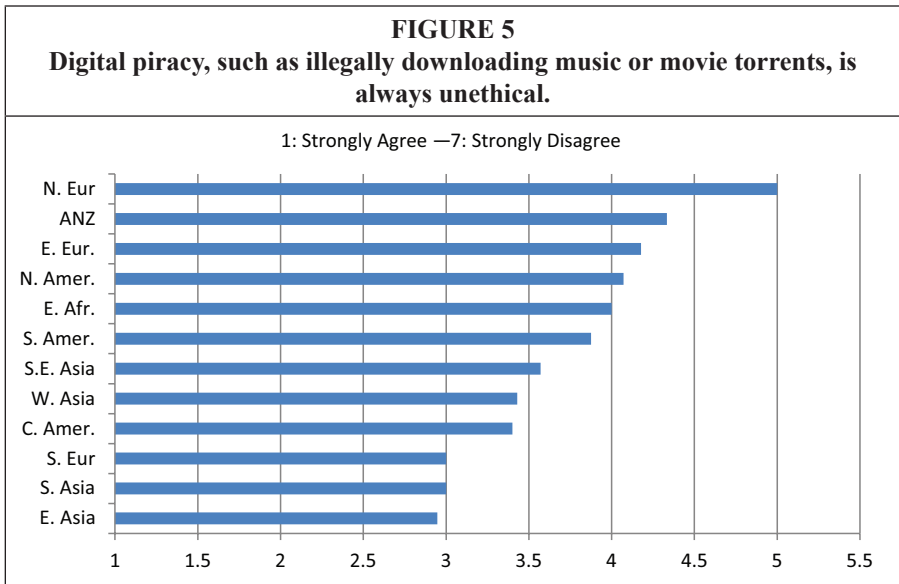
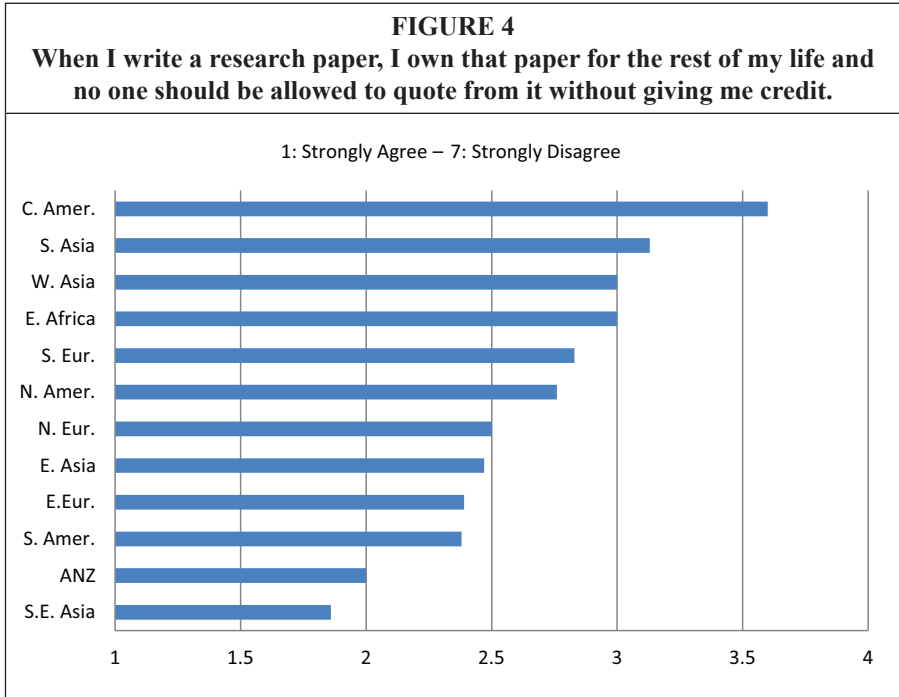
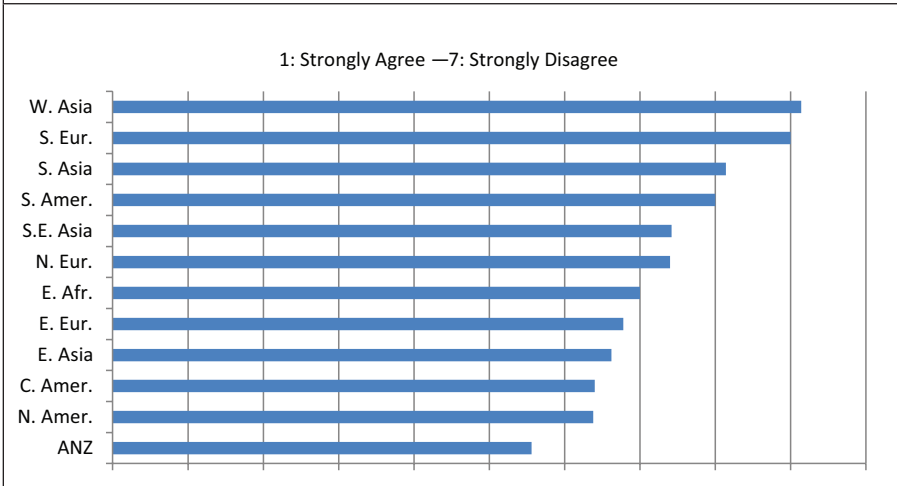


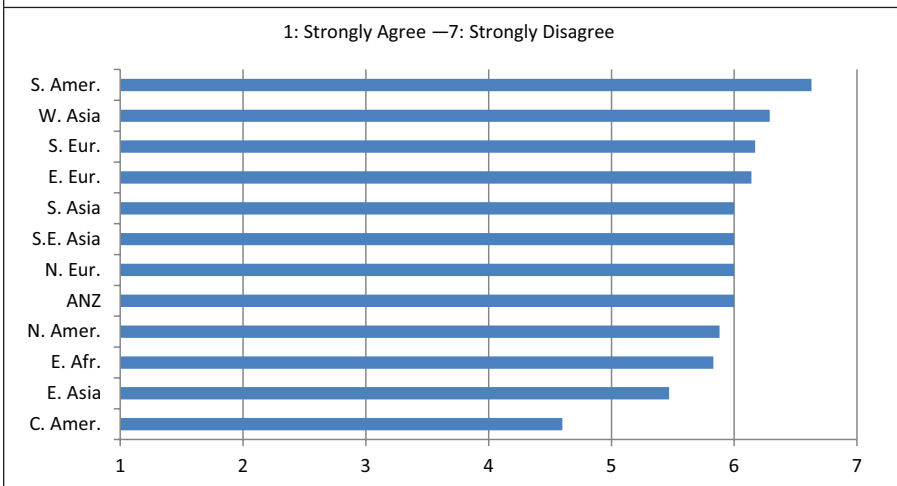
FIGURE 6
Copyright laws hurt creativity. We should be able to freely remix things we find on the Internet or offline.

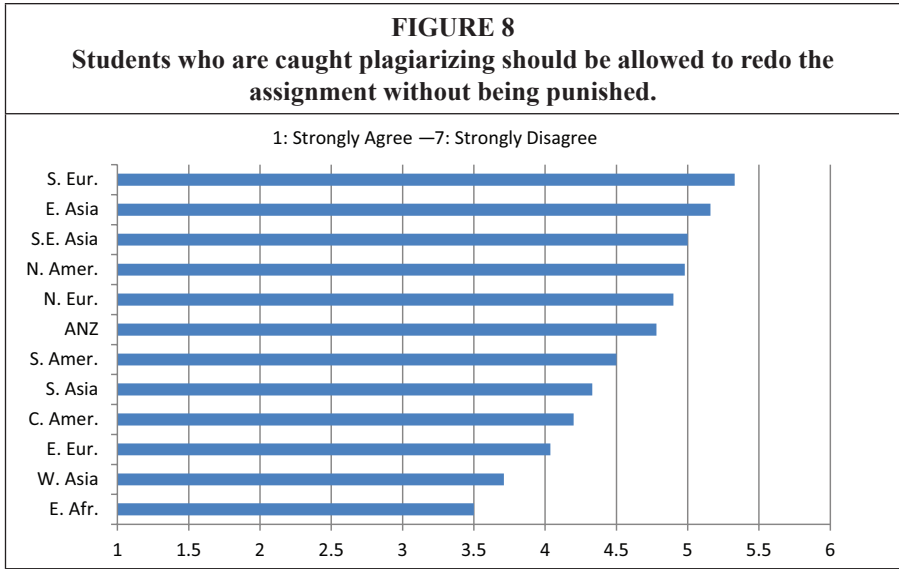


results might therefore be more meaningful. Unfortunately, due to low numbers of respondents in some of the categories, we had to remove them from our analysis. We set the bar at a minimum of 5 respondents, which left us with 12 geographical regions to report. In compiling our data, we found that the differences between regions are quite small, which means that students, no matter their nationalities, have roughly the same opinions of issues surrounding plagiarism and intellectual property.

One clear way to analyze the data is to look at the average (mean) responses from each region and see if there are any meaningful differences. We then looked at which questions had the greatest amount of variance—in other words, what questions elicit

FIGURE 7
It is unfair to ask students to cite other people’s words and ideas in class assignments.

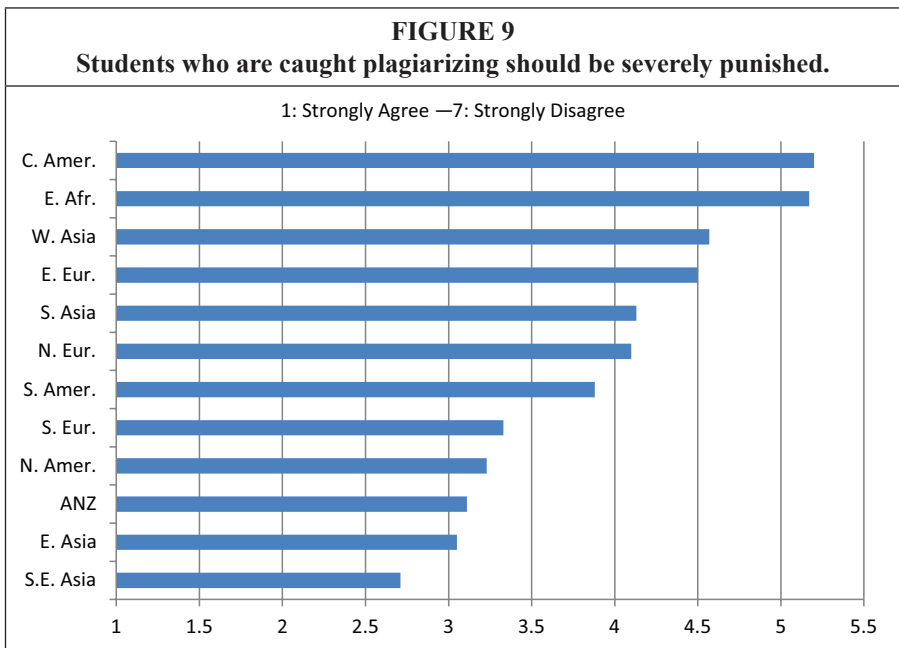




ited answers from students that had the highest amount of difference by nationality. We found six questions where the difference between the highest and lowest average score was 1.8 or above (roughly the difference between Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree on our scale).

Discussion

Generally, our group of international students has a point of view on intellectual property and copyright that is similar to the Western definitions. Their definitions,



with no prompting from us, were largely in line with the current state of intellectual property in North American higher education. As an example, the title of this article, “the fruits of intellectual labor,” comes directly from an Eastern Asian student’s definition of intellectual property. Also, most of the questions the students answered corresponded with the “right” answers—what we would expect from students who had received an education on Western-style intellectual property and copyright laws. They believe that authors should have control over their work. They also seem to agree and understand that using someone else’s words without giving credit is plagiarism. They believe that plagiarism is wrong and should be punished. They feel strongly that things they themselves create should stay under their control. It is not surprising to see that the question of digital piracy created the greatest disparity in student answers. Most countries are currently struggling to adapt their laws to new technologies and media, and it makes sense that this area would be confusing for our students. Indeed, on this issue the students show how they are conflicted: they want their own rights to be protected, but they are ambivalent about digital piracy.

What is most interesting about these data is the way in which it contradicts what is taken to be common knowledge about international students. We found that our students from outside North America do not hold widely different opinions about intellectual property from their counterparts. Also, opinions don’t seem to vary significantly by class year. As students progress, they are likely to view plagiarism more negatively, which is a sign that they are being educated about this matter somehow—either in class, from their peers, or simply by being part of the academic community. However, a sizable proportion of students (roughly one-third of the students who answered the question) claimed that their opinions were set before they entered college. Some of the variance in responses comes from personal experiences in creating pieces of intellectual property themselves. As they progress through their four years of college, they begin to feel more strongly that their own rights as creators need to be protected. It would be helpful to see more studies of high school students and the types of instruction they receive before coming to college, from a wide variety of regions. It would also be interesting to study directly how producing work affects students’ views of intellectual property, perhaps with a longitudinal study.

One of our goals in this research was to come up with ideas for how librarians can use a student perspective on intellectual property to improve our outreach and instruction. We have several recommendations. First, we need to focus on media, which was one area where the students were more divided in their answers. We must show students the importance of understanding the current laws and regulations, at least as they may apply to themselves and their own work. We should take advantage of the fact that experience creates knowledge. One possibly effective way of teaching students the value of copyright and other intellectual property laws would be to involve the creation of their own work using a variety of media. As one student from Australia and New Zealand wrote, the greatest impact in their understanding of intellectual property came from “Personal experience: research and knowledge relating to the distribution of profit in the music and movie industries.”

Our students know what plagiarism is, and view it negatively—this will certainly affect our outreach and instruction efforts. Knowing that our students are aware that they cannot just copy and paste information from the Internet is valuable knowledge, giving us a stepping stone from which to plan workshops, tutorials, or online learning modules. We can assume that they see plagiarism as an unfair practice, so we can focus on ways to avoid it. We can develop more practical exercises in paraphrasing and summarizing, which is often a sticking point for any college students. Hands-on workshops, where students interact with texts, would be an excellent option.

From our information it would appear that there is no need to target students by country of origin; in other words, there does not appear to be a need to create separate instructional materials for students from different regions. Our students all have roughly the same understanding of intellectual property and very similar opinions on the fairness of the current standards. In fact, it may be beneficial to students from different regions to attend workshops together, so they can share their experiences and see how similar their views really are. Several students mentioned the importance of discussion with their friends and peers in the development of their knowledge around these issues. However, it could also be argued that giving some cultural context to these discussions would be rewarding for students. Even if they have the same opinions, they may be coming to their decisions via very different frameworks. This is an area ripe for further research, perhaps by using ethnographic or other qualitative means.

It should be noted that there are some possible limitations to our survey responses. First, even though the students were told the survey was anonymous, it is still possible that they skewed their answers to what they thought we, as librarians and educators, would want to hear. They may have felt some pressure to provide the “right” answer since they knew they were representing their countries. However, this is a limitation in almost any survey — we must assume to some extent that our respondents were answering truthfully. Second, we did not receive enough respondents from some regions to include them in our geographical comparison. This could have been amended by targeting student groups representing the underrepresented regions. Third, as this was an online survey, each respondent had access to the Internet while taking the survey. It is possible that some respondents may have used a search engine to find definitions of intellectual property and copyright, meaning that they may have used resources other than their own background knowledge to answer those questions. We did not witness this activity in any of the surveys that were taken in the library, and we therefore have no reason to believe this possibility would derail our results. Fourth, the survey respondents were all volunteers, which means they may have been more interested in the topic of intellectual property than students who chose not to volunteer. Finally, all respondents come from the same institution. Although NYUAD is diverse in terms of its students’ countries of origin, this limitation should still be noted. It would be necessary to conduct a large-scale, international application of this survey to fully understand how well our students match up to their counterparts in their countries of origin.

This study represents our initial findings about students’ opinions on intellectual property and copyright at NYUAD. Given that this is our first analysis of this topic, along with our expanding student population and quickly evolving trends in these areas, future research will be needed to better understand how intellectual property is broadly viewed among our student body. One area in need of more investigation is the nature of the educational backgrounds of our students: for example, whether they attended locally governed, International Baccalaureate, or other types of schools. Educational background could certainly have an impact on students’ opinions of intellectual property issues, and it is therefore worth exploring further. To understand international college students more generally, more comparative information from libraries across the world, with diverse student bodies, will need to be gathered. The authors believe that this is an area ripe for future research.

Conclusion

The goal of this project was to see intellectual property from a multicultural student perspective. It is easy, as educators, to get caught up in our own point of view on a subject or to make assumptions about what our students know or do not know. This

is especially true when dealing with “accepted” knowledge about millennials, international students, or students that come from alternative educational backgrounds. One of our goals was to move beyond the realm of anecdote and into the realm of hard data by surveying our own diverse student population.

Through our research, we learned a significant amount about student opinions at NYUAD regarding copyright and intellectual property. We were able to gain insight not only into their definitions of these issues, but also their feelings regarding the fairness of current laws and rules. We were able to get information from a wide range of students, both in terms of geographical diversity and class year. We found that the majority of students came to NYUAD with at least a basic understanding of copyright, intellectual property, and the issues surrounding these concepts. Those who had little or no previous knowledge of these subjects learned quickly and usually within their first year at the university. Several students noted that they paid little attention to these concepts and their perceived importance prior to coming to university and embarking on their own creative works; it was only after pursuing their own intellectual and creative endeavors, or watching their friends do so, that they began to understand the importance of the protection of intellectual property rights.

The information we found will aid in our ongoing mission to improve our outreach and instruction to the student body at NYUAD. There are still many more opportunities for research into this interesting subject area. Some possible areas include investigating how students learn about intellectual property issues, the effectiveness of different instructional techniques, and how students view the nature of “authorship.” A fuller understanding of student opinions on intellectual property, copyright, and plagiarism should be of interest to many librarians and educators.

Notes

1. Susan Blum, *My Word! Plagiarism and College Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

2. Amanda Lenhart and Mary Madden, “Music Downloading, File-Sharing, and Copyright,” *Pew Research Center*, 2003, available online at www.pewinternet.org/2003/07/31/music-downloading-file-sharing-and-copyright/ [accessed 4 December 2014].

3. Colin Sowden, “Plagiarism and the Culture of Multilingual Students in Higher Education Abroad,” *ELT Journal* 59, no. 3 (2005): 227.

4. See, for example: Phan Le Ha, “Plagiarism and Overseas Students: Stereotypes Again?” *ELT Journal* 60, no. 1 (Jan. 2005): 76–78; James Lund, “Plagiarism: A Cultural Perspective,” *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 6, no. 3/4 (2004): 93–101; Ling Shi, “Cultural Backgrounds and Textual Appropriation,” *Language Awareness* 15 (2006): 264–82; Sowden, “Plagiarism and the Culture of Multilingual Students”; Wendy Sutherland-Smith, “The Tangled Web: Internet Plagiarism and International Students’ Academic Writing,” *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 15 (2005): 15–29.

5. See, for example, Yu-Hui Chen and Mary Van Ullen, “Helping International Students Succeed Academically through Research Process and Plagiarism Workshops,” *College & Research Libraries* 72, no. 3 (2011): 209–35; Jenny Gunnarsson, Wlodek Kulesza, and Anette Petterson, “Teaching International Students How to Avoid Plagiarism: Librarians and Faculty in Collaboration,” *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 40, no. 3/4 (2014): 413–17; Julia Marin, Kathleen Reaume, Elaine Reeves, and Ryan Wright, “Relationship Building with Students and Instructors of ESL,” *Reference Services Review* 40, no. 3 (2012): 352–67.

6. Nancy Fawley, “Addressing Academic Integrity: Perspectives from Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar,” in *International Students and Academic Libraries: Initiatives for Success*, eds. Pamela Jackson and Patrick Sullivan (Chicago, Ill.: ACRL, 2012), 177.

7. *Ibid.*, 177.

8. *Ibid.*, 176.

9. Deborah Williams, “Frankenstein’s Monster Got It Right: Think For Yourself,” *The National*, January 16, 2014, available online at www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/frankensteins-monster-got-it-right-think-for-yourself [accessed 4 December 2014].

10. Charles Juwah, David Lal, and Ahmed Beloucif, “Overcoming the Cultural Issues Associ-

ated with Plagiarism for International Students" (2006), available online at www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/bmaf/documents/projects/TRDG_projects/trdg_0506/Juwah_trdg2006_finalreport_webversion.pdf [accessed 4 December 2014].

11. Dilin Liu, "Plagiarism in ESOL Students: Is Cultural Conditioning Truly the Major Culprit?" *ELT Journal* 59, no. 3 (2005): 236.

12. Odilea Rocha Erkaya, "Plagiarism by Turkish Students: Causes and Solutions," *Asian EFL Journal* 11, no. 2 (2009): 91.

13. Glenn Deckert, "Perspectives on Plagiarism from ESL Students in Hong Kong," *Journal of Second Language Writing* 2, no. 2 (1993): 131.

14. Kwasi Sarkodie-Mensah, "Plagiarism and the International Student," *Catholic Library World* 80, no. 3 (2010): 197.

15. Specifically, the "Composition of macro geographical (continental) regions, geographical sub-regions, and selected economic and other groupings" used by UN Data, available online at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm> [accessed 4 December 2014].

16. Lawrence Lessig is a very well-known copyright activist and the founder of Creative Commons. For a summary of his arguments, see his TED talk, "Laws That Choke Creativity," available online at www.ted.com/talks/larry_lessig_says_the_law_is_strangling_creativity [accessed 4 December 2014].

17. Daniel Martin, "Culture and Unethical Conduct: Understanding the Impact of Individualism and Collectivism on Actual Plagiarism," *Management Learning* 43.3 (2011): 261–73.