

SYNOPSIS

INTERTEXTUALITY RECONSIDERED

Erik Borg

Abstract: All language is intertextual; as Bakhtin wrote, “the word in language is half someone else’s” (1981). In formal contexts, though, how we demarcate and identify other people’s texts shifts over time. Expectations, tools and ways with texts change, and, while the academy resists change, it may come nevertheless. On the one hand, inchoate intertextual practices are reshaping how texts are created and regarded: “curate” has become the buzzword for the assemblage of new texts. On the other hand, citation practices have become increasingly codified, with reference systems (e.g., APA, MLA) haring after new networked sources. Bibliometric indicators seem poised to overwhelm other ways of evaluating academic texts, while Turnitin and other plagiarism detection software have altered the meaning of “plagiarism” from the unacknowledged use of other’s words or ideas to the inappropriate use of a string of characters. At the same moment that the academy emphasises, both through student assessment and professional appraisal, the importance of overt citation, new forms of (particularly) multimodal communication blur the line between creating and “retelling in one’s own words.” This paper will analyse some of the changes in literacy practices that make plagiarism an increasingly fraught concept, and consider how we might move forward from here.

Key words: Intertextuality, curation, citation practices

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