Transcript for Timothy R. Amidon, Les Hutchinson, TyAnna Herrington, and Jessica Reyman's IP Cast 5: Asymmetry and Plagiarism in "Copyright, Content, and Control: Student Authorship Across Educational Technology Platforms," published in Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy (XX.X), available at http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/XX.X/topoi/amidon-et-al/turnitin.html

00:01 [IP Casts music, a soft harmonic resonance, builds to a crescendo]

00:06 Jessica: You're listening to IP Casts.

00:13 [IP Casts music fades out]

00:14 Jessica: Let's talk about Turnitin and plagiarism detection services. There's been discussion of tin and other PDSs with our field and some criticism about how we're using them in the writing classroom. However, we see that PDSs are still widely used across many campuses both in courses taught by rhet/comp specialists and in courses in which students produce writing which is many many courses across the college curricula. So my question is what are your thoughts on what it is about PDS that is so alluring. Why do people continue to use them despite all the criticism.

00:57 Les: When I was receiving training during my master's program the first time I was ever going to be teaching we were highly encouraged to use TIN as a means of addressing that students were always just going to plagiarize. There was always going to be plagiarized content that was going to be turned in to you. And were we warned you might not know how to identify plagiarized work so this will just sort of help you. I remember I implemented it in a class I was interning in which was we had 150 students. It was massive and I was doing all this sort of feedback to student writing and I had to use turnitin and I was going through and it was the first time I had used it on the other side not as a student but as an instructor. And I remember it seemed so useless to me because all it did was highlight quotes. So I was like oh yeah there's the citations. That helps. That helps!

01:57 Jessica: What you're confronted with you use the tool or what the output is is these originality reports right, so you have 80% original, 20 unoriginal, which really suggests that there is an algorithm that can identify content as either original or not, plagiarized or not, and that it's this kind of black and white issue. Where obviously in rhet/comp we know based on this long history of scholarship that those approaches are unproductive for teaching students to use sources and citations and those kind of fine distinctions that we make as teachers based on long recognized concepts like rebecca moore howard's patchwriting and others that are just unaccounted for within that technology.

02:38 This is tied up part and parcel with the larger thing of just how writing tends to be approached in the academy outside of writing studies often. where the focus is on where the comma goes and is it superficially correct. And so this is a way of outsourcing the attention to the ethical quality of that writing and the originality of that writing. If I'm an instructor I don't need

to spend much time with that cuz there's a handy tool that has certified that my students have done this thing well. And so now I don't need to spend too much time. Now there's a whole set of practices where now that educators and students really don't have a whole lot of choice. There's this corrosive way that that tool snowballs as something that becomes monolithic as central to how we ensure educational integrity occurs both within high-schools and at postsecondary levels. That element of asymmetry in terms of power relationships that we aren't I think always attending to. And I think that connects back to the points Ty's made about whether or not we do and should be treating student authors as authors with some rights to decide where their content they produce goes and with whom they share that content.

04:01: Jessica Well I think to your point there's real asymmetry in who benefits from this exchange. Students are really the ones who lose out, so the students who are using the PDSs they contribute their papers to the database the papers are copyrighted works it's their intellectual property. And, by using or requiring that students use a PDSs educators in a way are confirming that their IP has little to no value. You know we are asking students to willingly submit their papers without question giving up their rights to control how it is going to be used eventually. And the students aren't the ones receiving a benefit for having submitted their work: the educator receives the benefit of making their work more efficient and arriving at conclusions with using this evidence and obviously tin profits and benefits from the database of what is it a million student papers that they've amassed that they can then sell the rights to to college campuses. And so Tin is recognizing great value in their work, and their beneficiaries of students contributing their intellectual property but the students themselves aren't reaping any of the benefits of that. So that structure of them being asked to give up control of their work in that way really suggests that we're not recognizing the value of that work and that's problematic.

05:35 Les: There's also a tension there when like my case we had to use Turnitin as instructors and weren't really given option to choose that so sometimes even at that level the instructors can't sort of be agents and act in respect of student authorship and act in support of student authorship either.

05:57 Jessica: That gets to our heuristic where we do bring up this issue of permissions, so who is giving permissions to access the work to have different rights to do different things with the pieces of intellectual property. So when you have a system in place that compels people to participate there is no real permission process. So instructors can't choose whether they choose to use a PDS on campus if they are forced to by the administration; students can't choose if they are forced to by way of being students in a class, and so the participation is forced or compelled rather than opting in.

06:34-06:46 [IP Casts music, a soft harmonic resonance, builds to a crescendo, then begins to fade out]