

## Internet papers not worth much (and it's still cheating)

By Lisa Bertagnoli  
College Press Service

Let's say one evening you're innocently surfing the 'Net. By sheer accident you mistype a word and you end up at a site called "evil house of cheat."

(Honest, you meant to type "chat.") Curious, you double-click on the word "papers," then on "history." After all, that Civil War 20-page paper is due next week, and you haven't written word one.

Then, like a meadow in spring, a list of papers blossoms before you, on classic topics such as wars, presidents and foreign policy. And, what's this you see? They're free and the downloading. You only have to promise not to pass the paper off as your own.

This is not a dream, this is not a fantasy. This is cheating in the Information Age. Of course, it's not new; term paper mills have flourished in college towns and in the classifieds of *Rolling Stone* for decades. But on-line cheating is cheaper (free!), easier (just download away) and faster (no more waiting anxiously by the mailbox).

And it's plentiful, too: Academics who have made it their business to follow these sites say anywhere from 40 to 70 exist, with names ranging from the cheeky (oppapers,

short for people's papers) to the defiant (schoolsucks).

Contrary to the olden days, where not everybody had \$100 to spend on a paper, nearly everybody on college campuses has access to a computer, and thus, the Internet and its bounty of papers.

While the cheating game might have changed, the penalties are still the same.

Punishment for cheaters and plagiarizers ranges from failing the course or paper to suspension or expulsion at Indiana University-Bloomington; at Stephens College, Columbia, Mo., cheaters can fail a class or have their degree revoked. Harvard University students caught cheating take a year's "vacation" from school. At U.S. military academies, cheating means automatic expulsion.

### On-line Libraries?

For students who wouldn't dream of cheating (you only cheat yourself, right?), one question should pop into mind: How can these exist? Easy, says Kenny Sahr, who launched a term-paper site called schoolsucks in September 1996. "All this is a library," says Sahr of the term papers visitors can access by clicking on an image of "Thinker" statue. Sahr doesn't charge for the papers, which

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--University of Illinois professor  
Elizabeth Pleck



are donated to the tune of 20 a day by students around the globe.

According to Sahr, the schoolsucks library is a lot more popular than the one on campus. The site gets about 20,000 hits a day, and half of those visitors leave with a paper, he says. And in case you're thinking the visitors are from backwater schools you've never heard of, think again: One week in September, the Top 10 list of visitors to the schoolsucks hailed from solid academic schools such as UCLA, University of Texas-Austin, Washington State, Penn State and Rice University.

Of course there are those who would beg to differ with Sahr's description of his site as an on-line library, beginning with state legislatures. Almost every state has a law

against plagiarism or cheating. California's law lets site operators off the hook if they make users sign a disclaimer saying they won't present the paper as their own work. Texas's law, which took effect Sept. 1, is a little stricter, punishing those who profit from the sale or distribution of "academic products" meant to fulfill an academic requirement.

Sahr, who is 26, says the laws don't apply to him for several reasons. His disclaimer, for one, specifically tells students to use the papers for ideas, resources, even bibliographies, but not as wholesale term papers. Second, he says he doesn't profit from the sale of papers, but makes money from selling ad space on the site. And finally, Sahr denies the papers are "academic products."

### Friends and Enemies

Frankly speaking, the sites bug some educators. (That may be why two who keep lists of all the sites which collect term papers didn't respond to College Press's request for copies of it; they don't want them falling into the wrong hands.) An outspoken critic of the sites is James Taylor, vice president of academic affairs at South Plains College, a two-year school in Levelland, Texas. Taylor says it's not cheating or plagiarism that bothers him, but the fact that the presence of such papers gets in the way of the education process. "We're supposed to teach students how to write," he says, "and these papers interfere with that."

At the other end are professors such as Elizabeth Pleck, associate professor of family studies and history at the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign.

"I looked at some of the sites and thought the term papers in my area were pretty poor," says Pleck. She's not concerned about having a crafty student pull the wool over her eyes. "You know when a paper isn't (a student's) by the way it is written," she says.

Still other teachers worry that students view the Internet as a

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### Letters! He gets letters!

Satisfied customers often e-mail their thanks and praise to schoolsucks founder Kenny Sahr, who launched an Internet site from which students can download term papers free of charge.

Sahr says he's saving the best messages for a book he plans to write someday. Here's a sampler, warts and all:

*Your page rocks...having read your site about what the press thinks i finally got some motivation and have mailed a couple major newspapers around melbourne australia about your unmoral site for you...cool huh!"*

*"hey man, thanks for putting up this site, this has gotta be the best thing anyone has ever done for us students in history, you should also start a donation drive to help support and update school sucks, I know several peoplid who would very happily and generously donate money for a cause like this..."*

*"I'm writing to comment you and yours on your construction of School Sucks...it is very done and a help to all. May it prosper."*

## Southern Writers Symposium highlights work of Fred Chappell

By Alexandra Nulle Dummer  
Staff Writer

The 13th annual Southern Writers Symposium "exceeded expectations" according to director Dr. Mary Wheeling White.

The symposium, held Sept. 26-27, was founded by Dr. Sue Kimball, professor emerita of English, 13 years ago. This year, however, Dr. White put the symposium together with a lot of hard work, and will do the same next year.

She said the purpose of the symposium is to "celebrate Southern literature by presenting interpretations of the author's literature and memoirs of him."

This year's featured author was Fred Chappell, an English professor from UNC-Greensboro. Fifty-five attendants from around the country came to participate, and many of them were professors and Chappell's former students. The symposium "cultivated a friendly atmosphere rather than a stern academic atmosphere," White said.

Chappell was invited by White one year ago to be the guest speaker and was able to fit Methodist College into his busy schedule of book tours and events. "Several times he expressed his gratitude to Presi-

Chappell said the most important aspect of writing is "to know how you want the reader to feel when they read the last sentence and close the book."



dent and Mrs. Hendricks and Dr. Christian (head of the English Department) for inviting him and making the weekend possible," said White.

Chappell said he agrees with Robert Frost's saying, "Anyone who teaches and writes cheats his students." As professor of English, Chappell says he "observed students in a different way and listened to them carefully." This helped him to use the subject of teaching in his books. Chappell's favorite class to teach was freshman composition. "I worked harder than with any other [class] and got more satisfaction seeing the change from the beginning to the end

of the semester," he said. And Chappell was not afraid to say he hadn't always been a great teacher, but he did say, "I've learned a lot more than I ever taught."

Chappell has written many novels and poems, of which \$600 worth were purchased during the weekend. When describing the difference between writing poetry and fiction, Chappell said, "Poetry is more like walking through the woods...and fiction is like riding a bicycle." Inspiration sometimes works and sometimes it doesn't. He added, "I've been inspired, and now I'm sort of living on the interest."

Chappell said that creating material for a story comes through observing people and incidents. "I start out just generally telling a story and then other stories are born amoeba-like through conversations (of the character) or memories," he said. The important part in writing a good book, Chappell says, is "to know how you want the reader to feel when they read the last sentence and close the book."

Chappell closed his informal question/answer session of "Chat and Backchat, Sass and Backsass" by saying, "It's been the happiest existence anyone could wish for. So happy in fact, I sometimes feel guilty."



Senior forward Kemal Kansu currently ranks second on the Monarchs' squad in scoring with seven goals and leads in assists with seven. The Monarchs are currently 6-4 overall, and are 1-1 in the DIAC. (Photo by Scott Galayde)

## College costs continue upward trend

By Colleen De Baise  
College Press Service

The cost of college continues to go up nationally, outpacing inflation.

The average tuition at a state college or university is \$3,000 a year. It's \$13,000 at a private school. Those costs are about five percent higher--triple the inflation rate--than a year ago, said the College Board, which issued its annual college cost survey Sept. 24.

According to the College Board, most students are paying on average anywhere from \$36 to \$670 more than they did for last year's tuition.

But that's just the beginning. Most colleges also raised room

and board costs, which are up as much as five percent from last year. Fees rose as much as four percent at two-year colleges.

When it comes to paying for college, the news is mixed. A record amount of financial aid--about \$55 billion--was available to students last year, up 5.4 percent from the year before, the College Board said.

Most of the increase, however, was in the form of loans rather than grants, and most of the new borrowing was unsubsidized. That means more and more students are being forced to take out loans to finance their education, which they must repay after graduation.

Still, College Board President Donald M. Stewart said even

though most students and their families worry about the price of education, "for most Americans, college is still accessible--especially in the light of financial aid currently available."

Stewart noted that a majority of all students at four-year colleges pay less than \$4,000 per year for tuition and fees.

"Focusing too much on the highest-priced institutions overstates the problem and unduly alarms the public," he said. "The United States continues to extend higher education opportunities to a larger percent of the population than any country in the world."

Half of all college students receive some type of financial aid, often a combination of grants or schol-

arships, loans, work-study from federal, state and private programs, said John Joyce, a manager at College Scholarship Service, the financial aid arm of the College Board.

"Focusing on 'sticker price' or allowing 'sticker shock' to influence college choice will limit opportunities that are out there for students," he said.

In contrast to loan aid, federal grant money has grown only slightly in the past decade. Loans now make up about 60 percent of all aid, compared to slightly more than 40 percent in 1980-81.

In particular, the purchasing power of the Pell Grant, available to the neediest students, has dropped

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