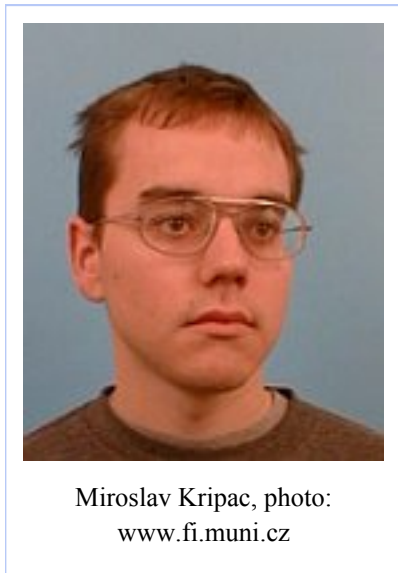


Current Affairs - Masaryk University lays trap for copycats

[2006-08-23] By Pavla Horakova

With the increasing availability of different texts in electronic form, copyright violation has become easier - but also easier to track down. Experts from Masaryk University in the city of Brno have now launched a system that can find out within seconds whether a student has used a part of someone else's dissertation or essay in their work, by comparing the documents stored in the university's information system.



Miroslav Kripac is a member of the expert team which developed the software. He told Radio Prague how the system actually works:

"This system compares all documents, it means students' works, theses or essays, and each document is compared with each part of other documents included in the [Masaryk University Information] system. This system is optimised for the Czech, English and Slovak languages."

Does that mean that students hand in their dissertations in electronic form as well as on paper?

"Yes. Masaryk University is a leading university in this country which puts a very strong stress on electronic support of learning, so all documents are included in electronic form, so this is not a problem. Since 2002, we have all homework and all theses and documents in electronic form."

For someone who does not understand computer science - how does it work? What do the lecturers need to do when they want to compare the works of the students?



"After the deadline for homework, the teacher can see all the documents of all the students who submitted them into the system and needs to only choose one function which is included in the global system and this function can display to him or her a list of documents that are the same as those submitted by students as part of their homework."

As far as I understand, the programme works for the documents that are part of the Masaryk University Information System. But how about copying other texts, can you check that as well?

"Today we try to manage only our internal documents but we are prepared for other external documents. We started to download external sources; external student pages or common internet resources, like internet dictionaries, and include them in our system to extend the possibilities of this function."