11.2: What Have You Found?

Organizing and synthesizing the information you find is the way information becomes your own to use. You should be prepared to summarize, interpret, explain and analyze as you research. You cannot skip this step and truly own the information you find. Any form of cutting and pasting OR copying OR highlighting indicates only that you have located information. It does not indicate that you know how you would use it to answer the questions you developed in the message analysis part of the process.

Using information without taking the steps to organize and synthesize almost always leads to some form of plagiarism. Once again, the communicator asks a set of questions:

- What does the gathered information, evidence, material mean?
- What are the implications?
Communicators can put any face on the information they choose. The challenge always is to present information in as complete, balanced, interesting and accurate a way as possible. The communicator may decide at the synthesis part of the process that additional information is needed. It helps to keep an eye out for holes in the logic of the argument you are making.

Think of the message as an exercise in convincing someone of the logic of your story (as in news story, ad copy, PR release, web site). If you are “pitching” your idea to editors, PR or ad clients or workplace colleagues, they will expect you to have a convincing argument for your approach to the message. The synthesis step of the information strategy process is where you build your case.