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Library Denies Conducting Plagiarism Check on Ombudsman's Thesis

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The doctoral dissertation of children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov was 99.32 percent plagiarized from other sources, news reports said Tuesday, though the Russian State Library has since denied conducting the checks that the reports cite.

Dissernet, an online group committed to exposing intellectual fraud by public figures, says the State Russian Library tested Astakhov's Ph.D.paper last September, finding that only 0.68 percent of the text was his original work, Gazeta.ru reported.

Excluding paraphrasing and text taken from his own master's thesis, 31.07 percent of Astakhov's dissertation was found to be copied verbatim, grani.ru reported, adding that this figure may be even higher, as the software used to detect the plagiarism was unable to recognize large amounts of the text.

However, as the news broke Tuesday, a member of the Russian State Library's press service

said on the Ekho Moskvy radio station that "The library has not checked the dissertation. There has been no inquiry."

The accusations of plagiarism were first levied against Astakhov by an affiliate of the Dissernet group, journalist Sergei Parkhomenko, in April 2013.

The Russian State Library carried out a check on Astakhov's doctoral work in September, Dissernet said, though the group decided not to publish their findings immediately, instead referring to President Vladimir Putin with a request to remove Astakhov from his position as children's ombudsman.

It was only after the group received a letter from the education ministry, saying that any questions regarding a degree's validity were invalid after a three-year period, that Dissernet decided to go public with the Russian State Library's findings.

Astakhov has previously denied the allegations of plagiarism against him, saying the software used to carry out the audit was unsuitable for analyzing scientific papers in Russian.

On Tuesday, his press service issued a statement saying "further discussion on this topic was pointless and counterproductive" and that only the Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation Ministry of Education could comment on the preparation, writing, and defense of dissertations, RIA Novosti reported.

The paper in question, "Legal conflicts and modern forms of resolution (theoretical and legal research)," was defended by Astakhov in 2002 at the Interior Ministry's university in Moscow.

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