8. Documenting and citing sources

In this chapter
- Purposes of documentation
- Styles of documentation
- Citations styles — examples

The final chapter of this handbook introduces you to why documenting and citing your sources is important. Documenting your research means stating the sources of information you used or consulted. The best time to begin preparing for documenting and citing your sources is while you are doing your library research — that is, at the time you are taking notes on your readings and resources. You will need to clearly identify the ideas and quotes that you might use and notate the complete information about all the original sources.

Purposes of documentation

There are several purposes of documentation — to credit sources, to provide evidence, and to refer to additional sources of information. One of the main purposes of documenting your work is accountability. This allows researchers to retrace and reexamine how you came up with your ideas. Citations identify the sources of your research. For researchers and a community of scholars, the citations also create a body of knowledge. Interested parties can locate and examine the source material and learn of the work of previous researchers. This acknowledgement spurs further accumulation of knowledge.

Credit sources

It is expected that you will be consulting other scholars’ works for your papers. Likewise, you are also expected to use this information ethically and properly acknowledge the authors of the materials you use. If you fail to give credit for another person’s words, ideas, theories or statistics you are stealing intellectual property or plagiarizing. Even if you reword or paraphrase passages in the work, you should cite the source.
Provide evidence

Unless you are writing a work of fiction or a personal account, you will need to provide evidence for the ideas and statements you write. Doing so will give credibility to your work. For example, if you claim that the Spanish population in the Mediterranean dropped from 8.5 million to 7 million in the seventeenth century, what was the basis for your claim? Did you guess? Did someone tell you? Or did you read it in a book, article, or reference source. As described in the previous chapter, you must evaluate the source and content of the information you use.

Refer to additional sources of information

There may be times when you want to tell the reader about additional information. This might include seminal works in a particular discipline or works that provide in-depth explanation and analysis on a related topic. For example, if you were writing about the current conflicts in the Middle East, you might refer readers to basic histories about the various cultures and ethnic groups.

Locate additional sources of information

The fact that researchers cite and share their information sources can be very useful when you are working on your own research project. When you find a useful book or article on your subject, you can locate more information by searching for the sources cited in footnotes and bibliographies. In order to use citations this way, it is important to be able to read them and recognize the types of materials to which they refer.

Styles of documentation

The conventions for documentation vary from discipline to discipline. Style manuals are published by a number of associations, presses, and publishers, which provide the rules and examples for citing various types of materials such as books, articles, videotapes, and Internet sources. All styles essentially have the same elements, but differ in format, order of arrangement and punctuation.

There are basically two systems of documentation — document-note system traditionally favored by humanities disciplines and the author-date system favored by the sciences and now popular with humanities and social science disciplines. Many humanities scholars use the MLA Style (Modern Language Association) while social sciences scholars follow the rules of the APA Style (American Psychological Association). Another style is the Chicago Style found in Kate Turabian's Manual For Writers of Term Papers,
Theses and Dissertations and in the Chicago Manual of Style. There are other specific style manuals that cover various other disciplines. If your instructor has not indicated which style you should use, be sure to ask. You should select one style and stick with it for the duration of your research project.

A detailed explanation of each style of documentation is beyond the scope of this handbook. Be sure to consult the full style manual of your choice for a complete set of rules and examples. To illustrate the basic differences among styles refer to the examples for a book, journal article, and web site in the following sections. Notice the differences in punctuation, placement of the date of publication, and the use of abbreviation of author names.

Citation styles — examples

**Book**

**Basic information**

Author: Connie C. Eble  
Title: Slang & Sociability: In-group Language Among College Students  
Place of publication: Chapel Hill, NC  
Publisher: University of North Carolina Press  
Date book published: 1996  
Book length: 228 pages

**Chicago style**


**MLA style**


**APA style**

Journal article

Basic information

Author of article: Patrick James Riche
Title of article: Gender Gaps and the Presence and Profitability of College Football
Periodical title: Social Science Quarterly
Date: December 1999
Volume number: 80
Issue number: 4
Pages numbers: 702-718

Chicago style


MLA style


APA style


Web site

Basic information

Title of Page: Citing Electronic Resources
Title of Complete Work: Internet Public Library
Author of Page: Not given/unknown
Date of Page or Last Update: March 1, 2000
Full http Address: http://www.ipl.org/ref/QUE/FARQ/netciteFARQ.html
Date Visited: April 5, 2000

Chicago style


MLA style

“Citing Electronic Resources”. Internet Public Library. 5 April 2000. <http://www.ipl.org/ref/QUE/FARQ/netciteFARQ.html>
APA style


Summary

In this chapter you have learned the importance of documenting and citing your sources. Proper documentation of the sources of your information will add to your credibility, acknowledge authors from whom you obtained information, and provide your readers with additional sources of information. You also learned that you can save yourself a major headache by preparing your documentation and citations while you are doing your research and gathering information. In addition, there are many styles of documentation. Be sure to consult with your professor on the style required for your assignment.

Workshop

Activities

1. Locate the latest editions of Turabian, MLA, and APA style manuals in the library. Their titles are:

   A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, by Kate L. Turabian. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.


2. Examine a journal from a humanities discipline and a journal from a science discipline. Choose a citation to a book or journal article from each publication and determine if the cited works are in the library.

3. Work with a classmate. Both you and your classmate separately choose a book or periodical article in the library and create a citation for the item you choose. Then trade citations with your classmate and both of you use them to determine the locations of the items in the library.

4. Choose a topic and locate a book and a periodical article on it. Create citations for both the book and the periodical article.
Questions

1. Why is it important for researchers to document their sources?

2. What are the two basic systems of documentation and in which disciplines are they often used?

3. Is the following citation in APA or MLA style?
   

4. Does the following citation refer to a book or journal article?
   

5. How would you search for the following item in the online catalog to find the cited item in the library?
   