

chicago citation examples for accession number

chicago citation examples for accession number are crucial for researchers and scholars who need to accurately attribute sources containing accession numbers, particularly in fields like archival science, museum studies, and scientific research. Properly citing these numbers ensures that readers can locate the precise material being referenced, maintaining academic integrity and facilitating further research. This article will delve into the intricacies of citing accession numbers using the Chicago Manual of Style, providing detailed examples and explanations to navigate various scenarios. We will cover the fundamental principles of Chicago style citations for accession numbers, explore specific formatting requirements, and address common challenges and best practices. Understanding these nuances is vital for anyone working with primary source materials or cataloged collections.

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Understanding the Importance of Accession Numbers in Citations

Accession numbers serve as unique identifiers for items within a collection, whether that collection resides in an archive, museum, library, or database. Unlike general descriptive titles or collection names, an accession number pinpoints a specific object, document, or specimen with absolute precision. This specificity is invaluable for reproducibility in research and for enabling others to find the exact item you are referring to.

In academic and scholarly writing, proper citation is paramount. When referencing materials that are identified by accession numbers, failing to cite them correctly can lead to ambiguity and hinder your readers' ability to verify your sources. The Chicago Manual of Style provides comprehensive guidelines for citation, and understanding how to apply these to accession numbers ensures clarity and scholarly rigor.

The primary function of an accession number in a citation is to act as a direct link to the source material. Imagine a researcher trying to follow up on your work; a well-cited accession number, especially when paired with the correct repository information, is like a precise GPS coordinate for the object of your study. Without it, the search can become frustratingly broad, potentially leading to incorrect interpretations or the inability to locate the source at all.

Furthermore, the practice of citing accession numbers is not limited to a single academic discipline. Historians working with archival documents, art historians referencing museum artifacts, biologists citing specimens in natural history collections, and even computer scientists referring to specific

datasets all rely on accession numbers. Therefore, a standardized approach to citing them is beneficial across a wide range of scholarly endeavors.

Chicago Style Basics for Accession Number Citations

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) emphasizes clarity and completeness in its citation guidelines. When incorporating accession numbers into your citations, the goal is to provide enough information for your readers to locate the item easily, while adhering to the stylistic conventions of Chicago style. This generally involves including the accession number alongside descriptive information about the item and the repository where it is housed.

The foundational elements of a Chicago-style citation for an item with an accession number typically include: the name of the repository, the collection name or description, the accession number itself, and any specific details about the item within that collection (e.g., date, title, dimensions).

It is important to distinguish between citing the accession number as part of a note and as part of a bibliography. While both serve the purpose of identification, the format and level of detail may vary slightly to accommodate the different contexts of each citation type. Notes are typically more concise, while bibliographies aim for a comprehensive overview of all cited sources.

When accession numbers are part of a larger collection or series, it is often necessary to cite both the series or collection and the specific accession number. This hierarchical approach ensures that the reader can navigate from the broader context to the specific item being referenced. The Chicago Manual of Style provides a framework that allows for this level of detail.

Identifying the Repository Information

The first and arguably most crucial component of citing an accession number is accurately identifying the repository. This is the institution or organization that holds the material. Without knowing where the item is located, the accession number is meaningless. This includes the full name of the archive, library, museum, or other collecting institution.

For example, if you are citing a manuscript held at the Huntington Library, you would begin with "The Huntington Library." If it's a specific department within a larger institution, like the archives of a university, you would include that departmental designation as well. Precision in naming the repository is key to avoiding confusion and ensuring your readers can locate the collection.

In some cases, the repository might be part of a larger organization, and it is important to be as specific as possible. For instance, citing "The National Archives" is less helpful than specifying "The National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland." This level of detail guides the researcher effectively.

Incorporating the Collection Name and Description

Following the repository, you will need to identify the collection or series to which the accession number belongs. This provides context for the accessioned item. Collections are often named descriptively, indicating the donor, subject matter, or organizational provenance.

If the item is part of a specifically named collection, such as the "Smith Family Papers," you would include that name. If it is part of a more general series, such as "Photographic Prints" or "Administrative Records," that designation should also be provided. The goal is to give the reader a clear understanding of where within the repository's holdings your cited item resides.

Sometimes, a collection might be subdivided into smaller series or subcollections. Chicago style allows for this hierarchical description, so you would list these subdivisions in order from broadest to most specific, leading up to the accession number.

Formatting the Accession Number Itself

The accession number should be clearly presented and distinguished from other textual elements. Typically, it is presented as a number or alphanumeric code, often accompanied by a label like "accession no." or "acc. no." Chicago style prefers conciseness, so using abbreviations can be acceptable, but consistency is vital throughout your work.

The specific format of the accession number will vary greatly depending on the institution. Some are simple numerical sequences, while others might include letters, hyphens, or slashes. It is essential to transcribe the accession number exactly as it appears in the repository's finding aids or catalog records.

When the accession number is the primary identifier for the item, it becomes a critical part of the citation. It's the key that unlocks the precise item within the broader collection. Therefore, ensuring its accurate transcription is non-negotiable for proper scholarly citation.

Citing Accession Numbers in Notes and Bibliographies

Chicago style employs two primary citation systems: notes and bibliography, and author-date. This article focuses on the notes and bibliography system, which is common in the humanities and some social sciences. Within this system, accession numbers appear in both footnotes/endnotes and the final bibliography, each with slightly different formatting conventions.

Notes (Footnotes or Endnotes)

In notes, the goal is to provide sufficient information to identify the source without overwhelming the

text. When citing an item with an accession number, you will typically include the repository, collection name, and the accession number. Subsequent citations to the same source can be shortened.

Here's a general structure for a first note:

- Repository Name, Collection Name, Accession Number, Description of Item (if necessary).

For example:

1. The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA, Smith Family Papers, accession no. HM 25183, Letter from John Smith to Mary Smith, October 15, 1925.

Subsequent notes to the same source would be abbreviated:

2. Huntington Library, Smith Family Papers, HM 25183.

If the accession number is very prominent and the item is well-defined within the collection, you might omit some descriptive elements in subsequent notes, focusing on the core identifying information.

Bibliography

The bibliography provides a comprehensive list of all sources consulted and cited in the work. Entries in the bibliography are generally more detailed than in notes, though the order of elements might differ. The accession number is a critical piece of information that must be included.

The general structure for a bibliography entry involving an accession number is:

- Repository Name. Collection Name. Accession Number. Description of Item. Date.

For example:

The Huntington Library. Smith Family Papers. Accession no. HM 25183. Letter from John Smith to Mary Smith, October 15, 1925.

Note the use of periods to separate the main elements. The accession number is clearly stated, often preceded by "Accession no." or "acc. no." The emphasis here is on providing a complete reference that allows readers to find the item if they were to visit or consult the repository.

It's important to consult the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for the most current recommendations on punctuation and phrasing, as these can sometimes be updated.

Special Cases and Variations for Accession Number Citations

While the general principles of citing accession numbers are clear, certain situations require specific attention. These include when accession numbers are used in conjunction with other identifiers, when they are part of digital archives, or when they refer to unique objects rather than documents.

Accession Numbers with Other Identifiers

In some cases, an accession number might be used alongside other cataloging information, such as a box number, folder number, or item number within a series. Chicago style allows for the inclusion of these additional identifiers to provide even greater specificity.

For instance, if an accessioned item is located within a specific box and folder:

1. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, Box 12, Folder: Diplomatic Correspondence, 1910, accession no. 68A-427, telegram from Ambassador to France.

In the bibliography:

National Archives and Records Administration. RG 59, General Records of the Department of State. Box 12, Folder: Diplomatic Correspondence, 1910. Accession no. 68A-427. Telegram from Ambassador to France.

The order of these identifiers should generally follow the hierarchy of the collection's organization, moving from the broadest category to the most specific.

Citing Digital Archives and Online Collections

With the increasing digitization of archival materials, citing accession numbers for online collections is becoming more common. While a direct URL is often provided, the accession number remains a crucial identifier, especially if the URL is prone to change or if the item resides within a large, navigable database.

When citing an online resource with an accession number, you would typically include the repository, collection name, accession number, and a stable URL if available, along with an access date.

- Repository Name, Collection Name, Accession Number, Description of Item, URL, Accessed Date.

Example:

3. J. Paul Getty Museum, Department of Photographs, Inventory of Photographs, accession no. 2000.56.123, photograph by Ansel Adams, "Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico," <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/2000.56.123>, accessed October 26, 2023.

In the bibliography:

J. Paul Getty Museum. Department of Photographs. Inventory of Photographs. Accession no. 2000.56.123. Photograph by Ansel Adams, "Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico." <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/2000.56.123>. Accessed October 26, 2023.

The accession number provides an alternative or supplementary way to locate the item if the URL becomes defunct. It underscores the enduring importance of these unique identifiers.

Museum Objects and Unique Items

Museum objects, artworks, and artifacts are often identified by accession numbers that are central to their cataloging. When citing such items, the accession number functions as the primary identifier, alongside the object's title, creator, and the museum's name.

For a note:

4. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Accession no. 1974.10.12, "The Tempest," painting by Hokusai.

For the bibliography:

Metropolitan Museum of Art. Accession no. 1974.10.12. "The Tempest." Painting by Hokusai.

In these instances, the accession number is so integral to the object's identity within the museum's collection that it often precedes or is listed alongside other descriptive details.

Best Practices for Chicago Citation of Accession Numbers

To ensure accuracy and clarity when citing accession numbers according to Chicago style, adhering to a few best practices can make a significant difference. These practices aim to maximize the usefulness of your citations for your readers.

Consistency is paramount. Once you have decided on a format for citing accession numbers, stick to it throughout your entire work. This includes the use of abbreviations like "accession no." or "acc. no." and the punctuation used to separate elements.

Always verify the accession number and its associated information. Cross-reference the number with the repository's finding aids, online catalog, or direct communication with the archivist or curator. Errors in transcription can render the citation useless.

Prioritize providing enough context. While the accession number is specific, it should always be accompanied by the repository name and collection or object identification. Without this context, the number itself lacks meaning.

Use the most current edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* as your primary reference. Citation styles can evolve, and consulting the latest edition ensures you are following the most up-to-date guidelines.

When in doubt, err on the side of providing more information rather than less. It is better for a reader to have a bit more detail than to be unable to locate the source due to insufficient information. This is especially true for unique archival materials or museum objects.

Finally, remember that the ultimate goal of any citation is to guide your reader. A well-cited accession number, presented clearly and accurately within the framework of Chicago style, achieves this effectively.

FAQ

Q: What is the primary purpose of including an accession number in a Chicago citation?

A: The primary purpose of including an accession number in a Chicago citation is to provide a unique and precise identifier for a specific item within a collection, allowing readers to locate the exact source material being referenced by the author.

Q: Should I use "accession no." or "acc. no." in my Chicago citations?

A: Both "accession no." and "acc. no." are generally acceptable in Chicago style citations for accession numbers. The key is to choose one and maintain consistency throughout your work. Consult the latest edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* for specific recommendations.

Q: How do I cite a collection where multiple items have the same accession number prefix?

A: If multiple items share an accession number prefix, you should include any additional identifiers, such as box numbers, folder numbers, or specific item designations, along with the accession number to ensure you are citing the correct item.

Q: What information is essential when citing an accession number in a note versus the bibliography?

A: In notes, you provide enough information for immediate identification, which can be abbreviated in subsequent notes. In the bibliography, you provide a more complete and formal reference to the source, including all necessary identifying elements for comprehensive listing.

Q: Do I need to include a URL when citing an accession number from a digital archive?

A: Yes, it is highly recommended to include a URL when citing an accession number from a digital archive, along with an access date. This provides a direct link, and the accession number serves as a backup identifier if the URL changes or becomes inactive.

Q: How should I cite an accession number for a museum object?

A: When citing a museum object, the accession number is typically treated as a primary identifier. You would include the museum's name, the accession number, and a description of the object, such as its

title and the artist or creator.

Q: What if the accession number is very long or complex?

A: Transcribe the accession number exactly as it appears in the repository's records. If it is unusually long or complex, ensure it is clearly formatted and separated from other text to avoid misinterpretation.

Q: Should I italicize accession numbers in my Chicago citations?

A: Generally, accession numbers are not italicized in Chicago style citations unless they are part of a title that is italicized. They are treated as alphanumeric identifiers.

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