

chicago manual of style bibliography art history

chicago manual of style bibliography art history is a critical component for any scholar, researcher, or student engaging with visual arts and their historical context. Properly formatting citations and bibliographies ensures academic integrity, allows readers to trace sources, and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the research process. This comprehensive guide delves into the intricacies of applying the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) to art history bibliographies, covering essential elements, common source types, and best practices for creating accurate and professional reference lists. We will explore the fundamental principles of CMOS citation, how to handle diverse art historical materials, and the importance of consistency in this demanding field.

Table of Contents

- Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style for Art History
- Core Principles of Chicago Style Bibliographies
- Common Source Types in Art History and Their Formatting
- Handling Specific Art Historical Resources
- Best Practices for Art History Bibliographies

Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style for Art History

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a widely respected and comprehensive style guide that offers extensive guidance on a variety of publishing and citation formats. For art history, its detailed rules provide a robust framework for presenting research accurately and professionally. The flexibility and thoroughness of CMOS make it particularly well-suited to the complexities of art historical research, which often involves a diverse range of primary and secondary sources, including artworks themselves, exhibition catalogs, scholarly articles, books, and archival materials. Adhering to CMOS ensures clarity, consistency, and credibility in your academic work, allowing your readers to easily locate and evaluate the sources that inform your arguments.

Art historians often grapple with unique citation challenges, such as

describing artworks precisely, referencing images, and citing ephemeral or specialized materials. CMOS addresses these nuances through its detailed guidelines. Whether you are citing a painting in a museum collection, a photograph from an archive, or an essay in a collected volume of art criticism, understanding how to apply CMOS principles is paramount. This guide will break down these principles into manageable components, making the process of creating a Chicago-style bibliography for art history more accessible.

Core Principles of Chicago Style Bibliographies

A bibliography in Chicago style is an alphabetical list of all the sources cited in a paper or book. Its primary purpose is to acknowledge the intellectual contributions of others and to enable readers to find the original sources. The fundamental structure of a Chicago-style bibliography entry typically includes the author's name, the title of the work, and publication details. However, the specific order and punctuation can vary significantly depending on the type of source. Consistency is the absolute key; once you establish a format for a particular type of source, you must apply it uniformly throughout your bibliography.

There are two main systems of citation within Chicago style: the Notes-Bibliography system and the Author-Date system. For most art history papers and scholarly books, the Notes-Bibliography system is preferred. In this system, sources are cited in footnotes or endnotes, and a bibliography is provided at the end of the work. The bibliography lists all sources consulted, not just those directly cited in the notes, though many instructors or editors may specify that it should only include cited works. The Author-Date system, which uses parenthetical citations in the text keyed to an entry in a reference list, is less common in traditional art history scholarship but is sometimes used in specific disciplines or for certain types of publications.

Author and Title Formatting

In a Chicago-style bibliography, authors' names are generally listed in the order of "Last Name, First Name." If there are multiple authors, the first author's name is inverted, and subsequent authors are listed in normal first-name-last-name order. Titles of books and journals are italicized, while titles of articles, essays, and chapters within edited collections are enclosed in quotation marks. This distinction is crucial for clarity and adheres to standard bibliographic practice. Pay close attention to capitalization rules for titles; typically, CMOS follows title case, capitalizing all major words.

Publication Details

The publication details provided for each source are essential for identification. These typically include the place of publication, the publisher, and the year of publication for books. For articles, the journal title, volume number, issue number, and page range are necessary. The exact punctuation, such as the use of colons, commas, and periods, must be followed precisely. For instance, a book entry might look like: Smith, John. *The Art of the Renaissance*. New York: Penguin Books, 2020.

Common Source Types in Art History and Their Formatting

Art history research draws upon a vast array of source materials, each requiring specific formatting in a Chicago-style bibliography. Mastering these variations ensures that your bibliography is comprehensive and adheres to scholarly standards. This section will cover the most frequently encountered source types, providing clear examples and guidelines.

Books

Citing a monograph (a book by a single author) is a foundational skill. The basic format is Author's Last Name, First Name. Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.

- Example: Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books, 1972.

For edited volumes, the editor is cited first, followed by the title of the book. If you are citing a specific chapter or essay within an edited volume, you will also need to include the author of that specific piece and the page numbers for that chapter. The format for citing a chapter in an edited book is Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Chapter." In Title of Book, edited by Editor's First Name Last Name, Page Range. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.

- Example: Gombrich, E. H. "The Arts of the Primitive." In *The Story of Art*, edited by E. H. Gombrich, 30-45. New York: Phaidon Press, 1995.

Journal Articles

Journal articles are a staple of art historical research. The format generally includes the author, article title, journal title, volume, issue, date, and page range. Titles of journals are italicized, and titles of articles are in quotation marks. Ensure you include the volume and issue numbers where applicable, as these are crucial for locating the article. Some journals might omit issue numbers if pagination is continuous throughout a volume.

- Example: Elkins, James. "Art History and the Art of Art History." *Art Bulletin* 87, no. 3 (September 2005): 401–421.

Exhibition Catalogs

Exhibition catalogs are vital primary and secondary sources in art history. They often contain essays by curators and scholars, as well as extensive illustrations and object lists. The format for an exhibition catalog is similar to that of a book, but it's important to clearly indicate that it is an exhibition catalog, often by including the exhibition title and dates. If an essay within the catalog is particularly significant and authored by someone other than the primary editors, it can be cited as a chapter in an edited volume, as shown above.

- Example: *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2017.

If citing an essay within an exhibition catalog:

- Example: Foster, Hal. "The Cruel Mother." In *Neo-Classicism: A Reappraisal*, edited by Robert Rosenblum, 150–165. New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1994.

Museum Collections and Artwork Descriptions

Citing a specific artwork as it appears in a museum collection or exhibition is unique to art history. It often requires specific details that identify the artwork uniquely. The artist's name, the title of the artwork, the date of creation, the medium, dimensions, accession number (if available), and the current location (museum and city) are essential components. When referring

to the artwork as it's presented in a catalog or exhibition, you would also include the catalog citation.

- Example: Picasso, Pablo. *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)*. 1907. Oil on canvas, 8' x 7' 8". Museum of Modern Art, New York.

If the artwork is referenced within a text or catalog:

- Example: Richter, Gerhard. *Abstraktes Bild*. 1994. Oil on canvas. For citation in a specific publication, add publication details as per book or catalog entries.

Handling Specific Art Historical Resources

Beyond standard books and articles, art history often necessitates citing a broader range of materials, from primary source documents to digital resources. The Chicago Manual of Style offers guidance for these less common but equally important source types, ensuring that your bibliography remains thorough and accurate.

Primary Source Materials

Primary sources in art history can include artists' letters, diaries, manifestos, interviews, and studio notes. These are often found in archives, special collections, or published editions. When citing archival material, be as specific as possible, including the collection name, folder number, and item identification. If citing a published primary source, treat it like a book or chapter, ensuring you accurately represent the original author and publication details.

- Example: Dürer, Albrecht. *Writings on Art*. Edited by Walter L. Strauss. New York: Da Capo Press, 1975.

For unpublished archival material:

- Example: Matisse, Henri. Letter to Gertrude Stein, April 15, 1910. Henri Matisse Papers, Box 12, Folder 3. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Websites and Digital Resources

The digital realm has become an indispensable tool for art historical research. When citing websites, it's important to include the author or organization responsible for the content, the title of the specific page or article, the website's name, the date of publication or last update (if available), and the URL. Crucially, include the date you accessed the material, as web content can change or disappear.

- Example: Metropolitan Museum of Art. "The Harlem Renaissance." Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. Accessed October 26, 2023.
https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/harlem/hd_harlem.htm.

It is also important to note that the internet is a dynamic medium. While CMOS provides guidelines, clarity and precision in describing the source are paramount. If the information is available in a more stable format (e.g., a PDF download that mirrors a print publication), it is often preferable to cite that version.

Images

While the image itself is not typically listed in the bibliography as a standalone entry (unless it's the primary subject of your analysis and reproduced as a source), information about the image's source is critical and should be included in your notes and potentially the bibliography if the image reproduction is considered a distinct source publication. This includes artist, title, date, medium, dimensions, accession number, current location, and the publication where the image is found (with page number). Some art historians may choose to list key reproduced artworks in their bibliography if they are central to the research, following the format of citing artworks.

Best Practices for Art History Bibliographies

Creating a high-quality bibliography is as much about careful attention to detail as it is about understanding the rules. Implementing best practices will not only ensure accuracy but also enhance the overall professionalism and credibility of your art historical research. Consistency, clarity, and thoroughness are the cornerstones of effective bibliographic practice.

Consistency is Paramount

The most critical rule in any bibliography, and especially in art history, is consistency. Once you choose a particular way to format a specific type of source, adhere to it throughout your entire bibliography. If you are citing multiple artworks from different museum collections, ensure the format for describing each artwork is identical. If you are citing multiple journal articles, the punctuation, capitalization, and order of elements should be the same for all of them. Inconsistency can be distracting to readers and may suggest a lack of meticulousness in your research.

Accuracy and Completeness of Information

Every piece of information in your bibliography should be accurate and complete to the best of your ability. Double-check author names, titles, publication dates, page numbers, and URLs. Missing or incorrect information can make it impossible for a reader to locate your sources. If a piece of information is genuinely unavailable (e.g., a publication date for a very old manuscript), you can indicate this with "n.d." (no date) or similar conventions, but always strive to find the information first.

Alphabetization and Organization

A Chicago-style bibliography is organized alphabetically by the author's last name. If a source has no author, it is alphabetized by the first significant word in the title (ignoring articles like "A," "An," and "The"). If you are citing multiple works by the same author, arrange them alphabetically by title. For works by the same author with the same title, sort them chronologically by publication date, with the earliest work appearing first. Some art history bibliographies might also include sections for different types of sources (e.g., Primary Sources, Secondary Sources, Visual Materials), but the alphabetical order should be maintained within each section.

For example, if you have sources by John Berger and two different works by E.H. Gombrich, the order would be:

- Berger, John.
- Gombrich, E. H. The Story of Art.
- Gombrich, E. H. The Sense of Order.

Consulting the Official Manual

While this guide provides essential information, the ultimate authority is The Chicago Manual of Style itself. For complex or unusual source types, or for clarification on specific stylistic choices, always refer to the latest edition of the manual. Many academic institutions and publishers provide access to CMOS online, making it readily available for consultation. Staying updated with the manual's revisions is also crucial, as citation practices can evolve.

Use of Digital Tools

Citation management software (like Zotero, Mendeley, or EndNote) can be incredibly helpful in organizing your research and generating bibliographies. These tools allow you to import citation information, store it, and then export it in various styles, including Chicago. However, it is essential to review the output from these programs carefully, as they are not always perfect and may require manual adjustments to ensure full adherence to CMOS requirements. Relying solely on automated tools without verification is a common pitfall.

Q: What is the primary difference between the Notes-Bibliography and Author-Date systems in Chicago style for art history?

A: The primary difference lies in how sources are cited within the text. The Notes-Bibliography system uses footnotes or endnotes for citations, while the Author-Date system uses parenthetical in-text citations (e.g., (Smith 2020, 45)). The Notes-Bibliography system is generally preferred in art history scholarship for its flexibility and capacity to include extensive contextual information in notes.

Q: How do I cite an artwork that is in a private collection and not widely documented?

A: Citing an artwork from a private collection requires careful documentation. Include the artist's name, title of the artwork, date of creation, medium, dimensions, and if possible, its accession number or any identifying marks. Crucially, you must also note that it is in a private collection and indicate the owner (if permission is granted to do so) or simply state "Private Collection." The year of access or confirmation might also be relevant.

Q: Should I include images in my art history bibliography?

A: Generally, images themselves are not listed as standalone entries in a bibliography. However, if you are reproducing an image of an artwork or photograph from a specific publication, that publication (book, catalog, journal) should be cited in your bibliography. If the artwork itself is the primary focus and you are referencing its reproduction in a scholarly context, you might cite the artwork description as a primary source, but the publication where you found it would still be cited separately.

Q: What is the best way to cite an exhibition catalog with multiple essay authors?

A: If you are citing the catalog as a whole, list the exhibition title and publication details. If you are citing a specific essay within the catalog, treat it as a chapter in an edited book. List the essay author first, followed by the essay title in quotation marks, then the title of the exhibition catalog (*italicized*), followed by "edited by" and the editor's name, and finally the page numbers, publisher, and year of publication.

Q: How do I handle sources that are difficult to find publication dates for?

A: For sources where a publication date cannot be determined, use "n.d." which stands for "no date." However, always make a diligent effort to find the date, as it is a crucial piece of information for dating and contextualizing sources. Some archival materials might have a specific date of creation or acquisition that can be used instead of a publication date.

Q: Can I use abbreviated titles for frequently cited sources in my Chicago-style bibliography?

A: In the Notes-Bibliography system, abbreviated titles are often used in subsequent footnotes/endnotes after the first full citation, but the bibliography itself should contain full, complete entries. The bibliography is meant to be a definitive list of all sources consulted, so abbreviations are generally not appropriate there unless specified by a particular publisher or instructor.

Q: What if I need to cite a dissertation or thesis in Chicago style?

A: To cite a dissertation or thesis, include the author's name, the dissertation title (*italicized*), the degree sought, the university, and the

year of completion. If it has been published, include the publisher's information. For unpublished dissertations, provide the university and year. If accessed online via a database like ProQuest, include the database name and accession number.

Q: How does the Chicago Manual of Style handle citations for performance art or ephemeral art forms?

A: Citing performance art or ephemeral art forms can be challenging. The key is to be as descriptive as possible. Include the artist's name, the title of the performance or event, the date and location it occurred, and the medium or nature of the performance. If documented through video, photographs, or written accounts, cite those documentation sources. Personal interviews with the artist or participants can also be cited as personal communications, following standard Chicago guidelines for such sources.

[Chicago Manual Of Style Bibliography Art History](#)

Chicago Manual Of Style Bibliography Art History

Related Articles

- [chicago manual of style bibliography geographic](#)
- [chicago manual of style book proposal for a crossover appeal book](#)
- [chicago manual of style academic students](#)

[Back to Home](#)