

chicago manual of style for electronic literature

The Chicago Manual of Style for Electronic Literature

chicago manual of style for electronic literature represents a crucial but often complex area for writers and scholars navigating the ever-evolving landscape of digital texts. As traditional publishing models give way to innovative digital formats, understanding how to cite, format, and refer to electronic literature according to established academic standards becomes paramount. This comprehensive guide delves into the core principles and practical applications of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) when applied to e-literature, covering everything from basic citation practices to specific considerations for interactive and multimedia works. We will explore how CMOS adapts to digital mediums, the nuances of citing online journals and websites, and the challenges and solutions for referencing born-digital texts.

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Understanding Electronic Literature within CMOS

The Chicago Manual of Style, in its various editions, has continuously adapted to the growing prevalence of electronic resources. While the core tenets of clear, consistent citation and formatting remain, the application to electronic literature requires careful consideration of the unique characteristics of digital content. Electronic literature, often referred to as e-lit, encompasses a broad spectrum of works, from simple hypertext fiction to complex interactive narratives and generative poetry. CMOS provides a framework, but writers must often interpret and apply its principles with flexibility and an understanding of the medium.

The fundamental goal of any citation style, including CMOS, is to provide readers with enough information to locate and consult the source material. For electronic literature, this means not only identifying the author and title but also specifying the platform, URL, access dates, and any relevant software or technical requirements. The Chicago Manual of Style's approach emphasizes author-date or notes-bibliography systems, both of which can be adapted for digital sources. The key is to be explicit and thorough, leaving no room for ambiguity.

Citing Online Resources

Citing general online resources, such as websites and web pages, forms a foundational element of using the Chicago Manual of Style for electronic

literature. When referencing a static web page, the essential components include the author (if identifiable), the title of the page or article, the name of the website, the publication date (or last updated date), and the URL. Crucially, for electronic resources that might change or disappear, including the date of access is also recommended in the Chicago style. This practice ensures that even if the content is updated or removed, the reader can still understand what was available at a specific point in time.

Websites and Web Pages

For a standard web page, the general format in the notes-bibliography system would be:

- Author's First Name Last Name, "Title of Web Page," Name of Website, Publication Date (or Last Modified Date), accessed Month Day, Year, URL.

In the bibliography, this would be inverted:

- Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Web Page." Name of Website. Publication Date (or Last Modified Date). Accessed Month Day, Year. URL.

For example, a note might look like: Jane Doe, "The Future of Digital Narratives," Literary Hub, October 26, 2023, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.lithub.com/future-digital-narratives/>. The corresponding bibliography entry would be: Doe, Jane. "The Future of Digital Narratives." Literary Hub. October 26, 2023. Accessed November 15, 2023. <https://www.lithub.com/future-digital-narratives/>.

Social Media and Blog Posts

Citing content from social media platforms or blog posts requires specific attention to the ephemeral nature of these sources. For a tweet, for instance, one might include the author's Twitter handle, the full text of the tweet, the date it was posted, and the URL. Blog posts are treated similarly to web pages, often with the blog's name functioning as the website name.

- Author's Name (or handle), "Content of Post," Platform Name, Month Day, Year, accessed Month Day, Year, URL.

Example note: @Writer123, "Just finished reading an amazing piece of interactive fiction! eliterature," Twitter, November 10, 2023, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://twitter.com/Writer123/status/1234567890>. The bibliography entry would follow the same inversion principles.

Citing Journal Articles and Books Published

Electronically

The Chicago Manual of Style addresses electronic versions of traditionally published works, such as journal articles and books. When an article is available in both print and electronic formats, it is generally preferable to cite the print version if it was consulted. However, if only the electronic version is accessible or if the electronic version contains significant differences (e.g., added multimedia elements), it should be cited as an electronic resource.

Online Journal Articles

For an article found in an online journal, the citation should include the author, article title, journal title, volume and issue numbers, date of publication, and the DOI (Digital Object Identifier) if available. The DOI is highly preferred over a URL because it is a persistent link that is less likely to change.

- Author's First Name Last Name, "Article Title," *Journal Title* Volume, no. Issue (Year): Page numbers, DOI.

If no DOI is available, the URL and access date should be provided.

- Author's First Name Last Name, "Article Title," *Journal Title* Volume, no. Issue (Year): Page numbers, accessed Month Day, Year, URL.

For example: John Smith, "Algorithmic Poetics and the Digital Muse," *Journal of Digital Humanities* 5, no. 2 (2022): 45-62, doi:10.1234/jdh.2022.5.2.45. In the bibliography, the format remains similar but inverted.

E-books

Citing e-books follows conventions similar to print books, with the addition of information pertinent to the electronic format. This typically includes the author, title, publication information, and the platform or format (e.g., Kindle, PDF) and potentially a URL or DOI if it's a freely accessible e-book.

- Author's First Name Last Name, *Title of Book* (Place of Publication: Publisher, Year), Page numbers, Format (e.g., Kindle, PDF).

If citing a specific edition of an e-book that differs from its print counterpart, that information should be included. For instance: Alice Brown, *Interactive Narratives and the Reader* (New York: Academic Press, 2021), 112, Kindle edition. If the e-book is only available online without a specific platform like Kindle, a URL and access date would be necessary.

Handling Multimedia and Interactive Elements

Electronic literature often incorporates multimedia elements such as video, audio, images, and interactive components that are integral to the work. Citing these requires a nuanced approach that captures the essence of the experience. CMOS acknowledges that such digital works may not fit neatly into traditional categories, and thus, the principle of providing sufficient information for retrieval remains key.

Interactive Narratives

For interactive fiction or other non-linear digital narratives, detailing the platform and specific navigation paths might be necessary if they are crucial to understanding the work. The citation should clearly identify the work and how it can be accessed.

- Author's First Name Last Name, *Title of Interactive Work*, Year (or Date Published), Platform/Medium, URL.

If specific interactive pathways or versions are important, they can be noted parenthetically or in a descriptive manner. For example: Sarah Lee, *The Labyrinth of Choices*, 2020, Web-based interactive fiction, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.example.com/labyrinth>. If the interactivity is complex, a brief description of how to access or engage with the core elements might be beneficial, especially in an academic paper.

Embedded Multimedia

When a work of electronic literature embeds or integrates multimedia content (video clips, audio recordings, animations), these elements should be described in the citation if they are essential to the work's integrity. The citation might note the presence and nature of these components.

- Author's First Name Last Name, *Title of Work*, [Description of embedded multimedia elements], Year, Publisher/Platform, URL.

For instance: David Chen, *Echoes in the Code*, [includes animated sequences and spoken word audio], 2022, Digital publication, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.digital-lit.org/chen/echoes>. The goal is to inform the reader that these multimedia aspects are part of the experience and how they might be accessed.

Specific Cases in Electronic Literature Citation

The field of electronic literature is dynamic, presenting unique citation challenges that push the boundaries of established style guides. CMOS, while robust, requires careful application and sometimes creative interpretation for these novel forms.

Generative and Algorithmic Literature

Works created through algorithms or generative processes present a particular challenge. The "author" might be the programmer, the algorithm itself, or a combination. Citations should reflect the nature of the creation process. If the output is unique each time, citing a specific instance with its date and parameters might be necessary.

- Author's First Name Last Name (or Name of Algorithm), *Title of Generative Work*, Year, Output generated on Date, Parameters used (if significant), Platform, URL.

An example: Creative Commons Algorithm, *Poem Generator Alpha*, 2023, Output generated on November 10, 2023, using parameters: theme=nature, length=10 lines, web-based, accessed November 15, 2023, <https://www.generative-poetry.com/poem-alpha>. This provides context about the unique generation process.

Works Requiring Specific Software or Platforms

Some electronic literature may require specific software, plugins, or platforms to be accessed or experienced correctly. In such cases, the citation should ideally include information about these requirements, along with the access details.

- Author's First Name Last Name, *Title of Work*, Year, Required Software/Platform, URL.

For example: Maria Garcia, *The Immersive Dimension*, 2019, Requires VR headset and specific application, accessed November 15, 2023, via application store link [provide link if applicable]. This alerts the reader to the necessary technical prerequisites.

The Future of CMOS and Digital Texts

As digital technologies continue to evolve at an unprecedented pace, style guides like the Chicago Manual of Style face the ongoing challenge of staying current. The increasing sophistication of born-digital works, including immersive virtual reality experiences, augmented reality literature, and dynamic, evolving online narratives, will likely necessitate further refinements and possibly new guidelines within CMOS. The core principles of clarity, accuracy, and discoverability will undoubtedly remain central, but

the specific details for citing and formatting these complex digital artifacts will continue to be a subject of discussion and adaptation within the academic and publishing communities.

The emphasis will likely continue to be on providing enough descriptive information for a reader to understand the nature of the work and, if possible, to locate and experience it themselves. This might involve more detailed descriptions of interactive functionalities, multimedia integrations, or the specific technical environments in which the literature exists. The ongoing dialogue between practitioners, scholars, and the publishers of style guides is crucial for ensuring that CMOS remains a relevant and indispensable tool for navigating the rich and complex world of electronic literature.

FAQ

Q: How does the Chicago Manual of Style handle citations for electronic literature that is frequently updated?

A: For electronic literature that is frequently updated, it is best practice to cite the specific version or instance that was consulted, including the date of access. If a clear versioning system or specific date of last modification is provided by the creator or platform, this information should also be included in the citation to provide the most accurate reference point.

Q: What is the preferred method for citing a digital-born work that has no clear author or publication date?

A: When a digital-born work lacks a clear author or publication date, CMOS guidelines suggest using the most identifiable elements available. This might involve using the name of the organization or website as the author, and the most recent "last updated" date or the date of access if no other date can be determined. The key is to be as informative as possible within the limitations of the source.

Q: How should I cite a piece of electronic literature that exists only as a navigable website with no distinct pages or articles?

A: For navigable websites that constitute a single piece of electronic literature, cite the entire website. Include the website's title, the creator or organization responsible (if identifiable), the publication date or last updated date, and the URL. If specific sections or functionalities are crucial to your analysis, you can refer to them descriptively within your text or in a footnote.

Q: Is it necessary to include URLs for all electronic literature citations?

A: URLs are essential for electronic literature that is not otherwise easily discoverable through traditional publication channels. However, if a work has a DOI or is part of a reputable, archived digital repository, those identifiers are often preferred over a URL as they are more stable and persistent. Always prioritize the most stable and authoritative identifier.

Q: What if the electronic literature requires specific software or hardware to experience?

A: If the electronic literature requires specific software, plugins, or hardware (e.g., VR headset, specialized reader), this information should be included in your citation. This alerts your readers to the necessary prerequisites for accessing and experiencing the work, ensuring they can understand the context of your engagement with it.

Q: How do I cite electronic literature that is part of a digital archive or repository?

A: When citing electronic literature found within a digital archive or repository, include the standard citation information for the work itself, followed by the name of the archive or repository and its URL. For example, you would cite the work's author, title, and publication details, then add the archive's name and URL, along with the date of access.

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