

chicago manual of style geographic citation for atlases

Mastering the Chicago Manual of Style Geographic Citation for Atlases

chicago manual of style geographic citation for atlases is a crucial element for academic and professional writing, ensuring accuracy, credibility, and proper attribution when referencing cartographic materials. Navigating the specifics of citing atlases within the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) can present unique challenges, particularly when dealing with the diverse forms geographic information takes. This comprehensive guide will demystify the process, covering everything from foundational principles to intricate details of atlas citation. We will explore the essential components of a geographic citation for atlases, delve into specific examples for different types of atlases, and discuss common pitfalls to avoid. Understanding these guidelines is paramount for researchers, students, and anyone needing to meticulously document the sources of their geographic data.

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Understanding the Core Components of Atlas Citations

When citing an atlas according to the Chicago Manual of Style, several key pieces of information are indispensable for readers to locate and verify the source. These elements work in concert to provide a clear and unambiguous reference. The primary goal is to allow someone else to find the exact information you have used, be it a specific map, a region, or a geographical feature depicted in the atlas.

The foundational elements typically include the author or editor, the title of the atlas, the publication information (place, publisher, and year), and specific details about the part of the atlas being referenced, such as the map title, page number, or coordinates. The CMOS emphasizes clarity and consistency, and for geographic citations, precision is even more critical due to the visual and spatial nature of the information. Proper attribution not only avoids plagiarism but also lends significant weight to your research by demonstrating thoroughness in sourcing.

Author or Editor of the Atlas

The Chicago Manual of Style requires identifying the primary creator of the work. For atlases, this can be an individual author, a corporate author (like a geographical society), or an editor or team of editors responsible for compiling the atlas. If the atlas is published by an organization without a named editor, the organization itself functions as the author. This information is usually found on the title page or verso of the title page.

Title of the Atlas

The full title of the atlas, including any subtitles, is essential. This should be italicized in footnotes and endnotes and presented clearly in the bibliography. The title precisely identifies the specific cartographic work being referenced, distinguishing it from other similar publications. Pay close attention to capitalization as presented on the title page.

Publication Details

This encompasses the city of publication, the name of the publisher, and the year of publication. These details help pinpoint a specific edition of an atlas, which is crucial as maps and their accompanying information can change significantly between editions. Always use the most prominent publication information, typically found on the title page.

Specific Location within the Atlas

Beyond the general atlas details, you must identify the precise map or section being cited. This might include the map's title (often presented in quotation marks if it's a section within the atlas), the page number(s) where the map appears, and potentially grid coordinates or folio numbers if provided. This level of detail is critical for geographical citations, enabling others to find the exact visual representation of the data.

Citing General Atlases in Chicago Style

Citing a standard, general-purpose atlas follows a structured approach in Chicago style, ensuring all necessary bibliographic information is present. This type of atlas is often a comprehensive compilation of maps covering a broad geographical scope, such as a national or world atlas.

The format for a general atlas citation in a footnote or endnote typically begins with the author(s) or

editor(s), followed by the title of the atlas in italics. Next comes the publication information: city, publisher, and year. If you are referencing a specific map within the atlas, you would include its title, followed by the page number(s) where it can be found. The bibliography entry will be similar but may omit some details and will be alphabetized by the author's last name.

Footnote/Endnote Citation for a General Atlas

When creating a footnote or endnote for a general atlas, adhere to the following structure:

Author(s)/Editor(s), Title of Atlas (Place of Publication: Publisher, Year), page number(s) or map title and page number(s).

For example:

- John Smith, *The Oxford World Atlas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 45.
- National Geographic Society, *National Geographic Atlas of the World*, 10th ed. (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2018), "Map of Europe," 112.

Bibliography Citation for a General Atlas

The bibliography entry for a general atlas streamlines the information and is alphabetized. The format is generally: Author(s)/Editor(s). Title of Atlas. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year. The specific map details are usually omitted from the main bibliography entry unless it's the primary focus of the work.

For example:

- Smith, John. *The Oxford World Atlas*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- National Geographic Society. *National Geographic Atlas of the World*. 10th ed. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society, 2018.

Citing Historical Atlases

Historical atlases require special attention, as they often deal with changing political boundaries, historical place names, and potentially older publication data. The principles of CMOS citation remain, but the content demands careful transcription.

When citing a historical atlas, it is crucial to accurately represent the information as it appears in the atlas, including any archaic spellings or dated geographical designations. The context of historical maps is paramount, so the citation should enable readers to access that specific historical representation.

Footnote/Endnote for a Historical Atlas

The structure is similar to general atlases, but emphasis is placed on accurately reflecting the historical context and any specific historical map titles.

For example:

- Robert J. Johnson, *Historical Atlas of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), "Provinces of Gaul, 50 CE," plate 12.
- Sarah Chen, *Mapping the American Frontier*, ed. Michael Lee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), map of the Louisiana Purchase, 78–79.

Bibliography for a Historical Atlas

The bibliography entry will list the author, the title in italics, and the publication details, mirroring the footnote structure but in a format suitable for alphabetization.

For example:

- Johnson, Robert J. *Historical Atlas of the Roman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Chen, Sarah. *Mapping the American Frontier*. Edited by Michael Lee. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Citing Digital and Online Atlases

The increasing prevalence of digital and online atlases necessitates specific citation practices. These resources may be dynamic or updated frequently, requiring a citation that points to the most stable and accessible version.

When citing an online atlas, include the author (if any), the title of the atlas, the website name (if different from the title), and a stable URL. It is also recommended to include the date of access, as online content can change or be removed. For interactive atlases, you might need to describe the specific view or query you used.

Footnote/Endnote for a Digital Atlas

The structure for online resources includes the author, title, website name, and URL, along with the access date.

For example:

- Esri. "ArcGIS Online." Accessed October 26, 2023. <https://www.arcgis.com/home/index.html>.

- Google Maps. "Street View of the Eiffel Tower, Paris." Accessed October 26, 2023.
<https://www.google.com/maps/@48.8584,2.2945,3a,75y,90t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sAF1QipMT3bX0kXI9h0k3n3p3-iV6q4F2h0-V3e8W8Y6Q!2e10!7i13312!8i6656>.

Bibliography for a Digital Atlas

The bibliography entry for online atlases follows a similar pattern, omitting the access date but including all other identifying information and the URL.

For example:

- Esri. "ArcGIS Online." Accessed October 26, 2023. <https://www.arcgis.com/home/index.html>.
- Google Maps. "Street View of the Eiffel Tower, Paris." Accessed October 26, 2023.
<https://www.google.com/maps/@48.8584,2.2945,3a,75y,90t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sAF1QipMT3bX0kXI9h0k3n3p3-iV6q4F2h0-V3e8W8Y6Q!2e10!7i13312!8i6656>.

Citing Atlases within Larger Works

Sometimes, an atlas is not the primary source but is instead a component of a larger book or article. In such cases, the citation needs to reflect this nested relationship, guiding the reader first to the containing work and then to the specific atlas within it.

When an atlas is published as part of a larger publication, such as an appendix or a chapter within a book, the citation should acknowledge both the atlas and its parent work. This ensures that the source is accurately attributed, and the reader can locate the atlas within its original context.

Footnote/Endnote for Atlas within a Book

The citation format for an atlas embedded within another work will typically involve referencing the author of the containing work, its title, and then specifying the atlas and its location within the larger publication.

For example:

- David Miller, *The Geography of Ancient Civilizations* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), appendix: Atlas of Ancient Migrations, map of the Silk Road, 250–51.
- In *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Rivers of the World," 2022 ed., Atlas section, 15:102–105.

Bibliography for Atlas within a Book

The bibliography entry will follow a similar pattern, detailing the containing work and the specific atlas referenced within it.

For example:

- Miller, David. *The Geography of Ancient Civilizations*. London: Penguin Books, 2010. Appendix: Atlas of Ancient Migrations.
- "Rivers of the World." In *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2022 ed., 15:102–105. Atlas section.

Special Considerations for Geographic Citations

Beyond the standard formatting, geographical citations for atlases often involve nuances related to the nature of maps themselves. The visual and spatial aspects of cartography present unique challenges for traditional citation methods.

One key consideration is the attribution of authorship for maps. While an atlas may have editors, individual maps within it might be created by cartographers whose names are not always prominent. In such cases, the atlas editors or the publishing institution often stand in for the mapmaker. Furthermore, the scale and projection of a map can be crucial contextual information, though CMOS generally doesn't require these unless they are directly relevant to the argument being made.

Map Title and Plate Numbers

When referencing a specific map, its title is vital. If the map has a formal title, it should be quoted. Many atlases use plate numbers or folio numbers for organization; these should be included to pinpoint the exact map, especially if page numbers are absent or ambiguous.

Scale and Projection

While not always mandatory, mentioning the scale or projection of a map can be important if the accuracy or representation of geographical space is a central theme of your research. For instance, when discussing distortions in historical mapping, citing the projection becomes crucial.

Geographic Coordinates

For extremely precise referencing, particularly in scientific or technical contexts, geographical coordinates (latitude and longitude) might be included. However, for most standard academic writing, page numbers or map titles suffice, and coordinates are considered extraneous detail.

Common Mistakes in Atlas Citation

Several recurring errors can undermine the accuracy and credibility of citations for atlases. Being aware of these pitfalls can help writers avoid them and ensure their work adheres to CMOS standards.

One of the most frequent mistakes is omitting the specific map title or page number, treating the atlas as a monolithic source rather than a collection of individual maps. Inconsistency in formatting, such as failing to italicize atlas titles or misquoting map titles, also detracts from professionalism. Another error is not differentiating between footnotes/endnotes and bibliography entries, which have distinct requirements.

Incomplete Bibliographic Information

Forgetting to include essential publication details like the publisher, place of publication, or year can make it difficult for readers to locate the specific edition of the atlas. This is particularly problematic for atlases that are updated regularly.

Incorrect Formatting of Titles

Mistakes in italicizing the atlas title or quoting map titles can lead to confusion and appear unprofessional. Strict adherence to CMOS guidelines regarding title formatting is necessary.

Ignoring Specific Map Details

Failing to provide the exact map title and page number or plate number means the citation is too general. This is a critical oversight when the precise location of geographic information is important.

Confusing Digital and Print Citation Styles

Applying print citation rules to online atlases, or vice versa, will result in an inaccurate and unhelpful citation. The nature of the resource dictates the citation format, especially regarding URLs and access dates.

The art of citing geographic information from atlases is a nuanced but essential skill. By meticulously following the guidelines set forth in the Chicago Manual of Style, writers can ensure their work is accurate, well-supported, and easily verifiable. The attention to detail required for atlas citations, from basic publication data to specific map references, underscores the importance of precise scholarly practice. Mastering these principles will elevate the quality and credibility of any research that relies on cartographic sources.

FAQ

Q: What is the most crucial element when citing an atlas in Chicago style?

A: The most crucial element is providing enough specific detail for your reader to locate the exact map or geographic information you are referencing. This typically includes the atlas title, publication information, and the specific map's title and page number or plate number.

Q: How do I cite a map from an atlas if it doesn't have a title?

A: If a map within an atlas lacks a specific title, you should provide a descriptive title for it in quotation marks, such as "Map of the Great Lakes region" or "Topographical map of Mount Everest," followed by the page number(s) where it appears.

Q: Should I include the scale of the map when citing an atlas in Chicago style?

A: Generally, the Chicago Manual of Style does not require the map's scale to be included in a citation unless the scale itself is directly relevant to your argument or analysis. Focus on author, title, publication details, and the specific location of the map.

Q: How does the citation differ for a digital atlas compared to a print atlas in Chicago style?

A: For digital or online atlases, you must include a stable URL and the date of access. Print atlases require a place of publication, publisher, and year. The overall structure is similar, but the source location details are distinct.

Q: What if the atlas has multiple editions? Which edition should I cite?

A: You should always cite the specific edition of the atlas that you used. If the atlas has been updated, different editions may contain different maps or information, making the edition number a critical piece of bibliographical data.

Q: Who is considered the author of an atlas if it's published by a society or organization?

A: If an atlas is published by an organization or society without a named editor or author, the organization itself is considered the author. For example, the National Geographic Society would be listed as the author for their atlases.

Q: How do I cite a specific region on a map within an atlas?

A: You would cite the atlas as usual, including the map title and page number. If you need to draw attention to a specific region on that map, you would describe it in your text and then provide the full citation for the map. For example: "The burgeoning trade routes are evident on the Map of the Eastern Mediterranean (Smith 2019, 78)."

Q: Can I use a shortened form for subsequent citations of the same atlas?

A: Yes, after the first full citation of an atlas in footnotes or endnotes, you can use a shortened form that includes the author's last name and the page number or map title. For the bibliography, only the full entry is listed.

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