

chicago style author date for map

Navigating Cartographic Citations: A Comprehensive Guide to Chicago Style Author-Date for Maps

chicago style author date for map citations might seem like a niche concern, but accurately documenting cartographic sources is crucial for academic integrity and scholarly communication. Whether you're a student crafting a research paper or a seasoned researcher delving into historical geography, understanding how to cite maps using the Chicago Manual of Style's author-date system is paramount. This article provides a detailed breakdown of the process, covering everything from identifying necessary elements to formatting your citations correctly. We will explore the unique challenges presented by maps as sources, the essential components of a Chicago style author-date map citation, and practical examples for various map types. Furthermore, we'll address common questions and provide clarity on best practices for integrating these citations into your work.

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Understanding the Chicago Style Author-Date System

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) offers two primary citation systems: notes-bibliography and author-date. The author-date system is favored in many social sciences and natural sciences due to its conciseness and ease of use within the text. It relies on parenthetical in-text citations that include the author's last name and the year of publication, which directly correspond to a full bibliographic entry in the reference list. This system prioritizes providing readers with immediate access to the source's origin, allowing for quick verification and further exploration. For maps, which can sometimes be complex to attribute, adhering to this system ensures clarity and consistency.

The fundamental principle of the author-date system is to provide enough information in the in-text citation to uniquely identify the source, which is then elaborated upon in the reference list. Unlike the notes-bibliography system, which uses footnotes or endnotes extensively, the author-date system minimizes such interruptions to the reading flow. This makes it particularly useful for longer works where frequent referencing is necessary.

Key Elements of a Chicago Style Author-Date Map Citation

Creating a robust Chicago style author-date citation for a map requires careful attention to several critical components. These elements ensure that your readers can locate and understand the map you are referencing, even if it's a historical or obscure cartographic work. Identifying the author or responsible entity, the publication year, the map title, and the source of publication are the cornerstones of this citation style.

Author or Responsible Entity

The "author" of a map is not always a single individual in the traditional sense. It can be a government agency, a surveying company, a cartographic firm, or an individual cartographer. When citing a map, identify the most specific entity responsible for its creation. If an individual cartographer is credited, use their name. If a government body or a corporate entity produced the map, use the name of that organization.

For example, if a map was produced by the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the USGS would be considered the author. If a specific cartographer is named on the map, such as "John Smith, cartographer," then John Smith would be the author. In cases where no specific author is evident, use the title as the first element of the citation, treating it as if it were the author.

Publication Year

The publication year is a vital piece of information for dating the map and understanding its historical context. Always try to find the most precise publication date available. This could be a full date (month, day, year), just the year, or even an estimated date if the exact year is unknown.

If the map has been revised or reprinted multiple times, cite the original publication year or the year of the specific edition you consulted. If a map is part of a larger work, like an atlas, the publication year of the atlas is generally used. If only an edition number or revision date is available, use that information.

Map Title

The title of the map is essential for its identification. Capitalize the title according to Chicago style conventions (title case for main words, lowercase for articles, prepositions, and conjunctions unless

they are the first or last word). Italicize the title of the map.

Be sure to transcribe the title accurately as it appears on the map. If there is a subtitle, include it after a colon. If the map lacks a formal title, create a descriptive title in plain text and indicate that it is an original title, such as "[Map of Downtown Chicago]".

Scale and Projection (When Applicable)

While not always mandatory for every citation, including the map's scale and projection can be highly beneficial, especially in academic contexts where precision is valued. The scale indicates the ratio between distances on the map and corresponding distances on the ground. The projection refers to the method used to represent the Earth's curved surface on a flat plane.

For example, a scale might be presented as "Scale 1:24,000" or "Scale 1 inch to 1 mile." Projection information might be less commonly found directly on the map but can sometimes be discovered in accompanying documentation or metadata.

Publisher and Place of Publication

This element identifies who published the map and where it was published. For commercial maps, this would be the publishing company and the city where they are based. For maps produced by government agencies, the agency itself often serves as both author and publisher, and the place of publication might be less relevant or omitted if the agency is widely recognized.

If the map is part of a larger publication, such as an atlas or a book, then the publisher and place of publication of that larger work are cited. Ensure this information is clearly listed on the map or in its accompanying materials.

Source or Series Information

This refers to the collection or series to which the map belongs, if applicable. For example, a map might be part of a specific historical atlas series or a collection of regional maps. Providing this information helps contextualize the map within its original publication or distribution framework.

If the map is found online, the URL and access date are crucial. If it's part of a database, include the database name and any relevant accession numbers.

Specific Guidance for Different Map Types

The nature of a map—whether it's a historical document, a digital rendering, or part of a larger publication—influences how it is cited. Understanding these nuances ensures your citations are accurate and informative.

Printed Maps

For a standalone printed map, the author, year, title, and publisher are the core components. For instance, a citation might look like:

National Geographic Society. 2018. *World Political Map*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society.

If the map is an older, historical document without a clear publisher or author, you might adapt the citation. For instance:

Smith, John. 1750. *A Plan of the City of Philadelphia*. [Philadelphia: s.n.].

Here, "[s.n.]" indicates that no publisher was named.

Maps in Atlases or Books

When a map is included as part of a larger work, you cite the atlas or book as the primary source, with specific details about the map itself. The author of the map might be credited within the atlas, or the atlas publisher might be considered the responsible entity.

Example:

Roberts, Susan, and David Lee. 2020. "Map of Ancient Roman Roads." In *The Historical Atlas of Europe*, 45–47. London: Oxford University Press.

In this case, "Roberts, Susan, and David Lee" are the authors of the specific map chapter or insert, and "The Historical Atlas of Europe" is the larger work.

Digital and Online Maps

Citing digital maps requires including information about the platform, URL, and access date. This is particularly important for dynamic maps that can change over time.

Example:

Google. 2023. *Google Maps*. Accessed October 27, 2023. <https://maps.google.com/>.

For more specific online maps, such as those within a digital archive or research project, include as much detail as possible.

Example:

Library of Congress. 2019. *Map of the United States and Territories*. Cartographia Collection.
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3700.ct000040/>.

Thematic Maps

Thematic maps, which depict specific data or themes (e.g., population density, climate zones), often have an author or organization responsible for both the data and the cartographic representation.

Example:

United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Population Division. 2022. *World Population Distribution by Country*. United Nations Cartographic Section.

This citation identifies the specific department responsible for the thematic data and cartographic output.

In-Text Citations for Maps

In the Chicago author-date system, in-text citations provide a brief reference to the source, directing readers to the full bibliographic entry. For maps, this follows the standard author-date format.

Standard Author-Date Format

The most common format for in-text citations is (Author Last Name Year). If the author is an organization, use the organization's name.

Example:

The study revealed a significant shift in settlement patterns over the last century (National Geographic Society 2018).

If the map has no author, the title (or a shortened version of it) is used.

Example:

Early depictions of the coastline were often highly stylized (*Plan of the City of Philadelphia* 1750).

Including Page or Map Numbers

For maps that are part of larger works, you might include a page number or a specific map identifier if available.

Example:

The ancient trade routes are clearly marked on the map (Roberts and Lee 2020, 45).

If the map has a specific plate or sheet number, that can also be included for greater precision.

Example:

The survey data was compiled using information from sheet 7B (USGS 1995, sheet 7B).

When Author and Year are the Same

If you cite multiple works by the same author from the same year, you will need to distinguish them by adding lowercase letters (a, b, c, etc.) after the year, both in the in-text citation and in the reference list.

Example:

(Smith 2021a)

(Smith 2021b)

This ensures that each source is uniquely identified.

Common Challenges and Solutions in Map Citation

Citing maps can present unique challenges not encountered with more traditional textual sources.

Overcoming these requires a flexible approach to applying citation rules.

Lack of Clear Author or Publication Date

One of the most frequent issues is the absence of a clearly identified author or a precise publication date. For historical maps, these details may have been lost to time or never recorded.

Solution: If no author is named, use the map title as the first element of the citation. If a publication date is unavailable, use an estimated date or the date of creation if known, and note the uncertainty. For example, "[ca. 1850]" for "circa 1850" or "[date of creation unknown]."

Multiple Authors or Contributors

Maps can be the product of numerous individuals or organizations, including surveyors, engravers, publishers, and editors.

Solution: Identify the primary responsible party. This is often the entity that commissioned or published

the map. If individual cartographers are credited, list the first one followed by "et al." if there are more than two or three. For organizational efforts, list the most specific entity responsible.

Maps as Part of Larger, Undated Collections

Sometimes maps are found within archives or collections where the specific map's publication date is unclear, but the collection itself is dated.

Solution: Cite the collection's date if the map's individual date is unknown. You can also note the approximate date of the map if it can be reasonably inferred from the collection's context.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Data and Interactive Maps

Modern cartography often involves digital data and interactive platforms that don't fit neatly into traditional citation models.

Solution: Focus on the creator of the data or platform, the date of access, and a stable URL if possible. For dynamic maps, mention the date the map was accessed, as the content may change. Clearly indicate that it is an interactive map or GIS data.

Best Practices for Map Citation

Adhering to best practices ensures that your map citations are not only compliant with Chicago style but also enhance the credibility and clarity of your research. Consistency and meticulousness are key.

Be Specific and Consistent

Always strive for the highest level of specificity in your citations. If you have multiple maps from the same author and year, ensure your in-text citations and reference list entries clearly differentiate them using the letter system (a, b, c). Maintain absolute consistency in formatting throughout your document.

Consult the Map Itself Thoroughly

Examine the map carefully for all relevant information: title, author, publisher, date, scale, legend, and any annotations. Sometimes, crucial details are located on the map's border, in the margin, or on an accompanying verso.

Utilize Reliable Secondary Sources

If you are citing a map found within an academic article, book, or online repository, use the citation information provided by that source as a starting point. Cross-reference this information with the map itself if possible.

When in Doubt, Be Clear

If a particular piece of information is difficult to determine or absent, it is better to acknowledge this within your citation or in a note rather than misrepresenting the source. For example, you might use "[publisher not indicated]" or "[date of creation uncertain]."

Prioritize Accessibility for Readers

The ultimate goal of any citation system is to allow your readers to find the sources you consulted.

Ensure that the information you provide is sufficient for them to locate the map, whether it's a physical object in an archive or a digital resource online.

FAQ

Q: How do I cite a map from a historical atlas in Chicago style author-date?

A: When citing a map from a historical atlas, you generally cite the atlas as the source, noting the map's title and page number within the atlas. For example: Author of Map (if known). "Title of Map." In Title of Atlas, page numbers. Publisher, Year. If the map has a specific cartographer credited separately from the atlas authors, you may include that.

Q: What if a map has no author listed? How do I handle this in Chicago style author-date?

A: If a map has no identifiable author, you should use the map's title as the first element of your citation. The title should be italicized, and the citation will then follow with the publication year and other relevant details. For example: *World Political Map*. 2018. Publisher, Place of Publication.

Q: How do I cite a map found online, like Google Maps, using Chicago style author-date?

A: For online maps like Google Maps, you cite the creator of the map (e.g., Google), the title of the

map interface (e.g., Google Maps), the access date, and the URL. For example: Google. 2023. Google Maps. Accessed October 27, 2023. <https://maps.google.com/>.

Q: Should I italicize the title of a map in Chicago style author-date citations?

A: Yes, according to the Chicago Manual of Style, the title of a map, when treated as a standalone work or as a major part of a larger work (like a chapter title), should be italicized.

Q: What is the best way to handle maps with multiple cartographers in Chicago style author-date?

A: If a map lists multiple cartographers, cite the first cartographer's name, followed by "et al." if there are more than two or three credited individuals. If a specific entity or organization is primarily responsible for the map's creation and publication, it might be more appropriate to cite that entity as the author.

Q: How do I include the scale and projection of a map in my Chicago style author-date citation?

A: Including the scale and projection is optional but recommended for detailed academic citations. If you choose to include them, they typically follow the map's title or other descriptive information. For example: Smith, John. 1888. Map of the Western Territories. Scale 1:1,000,000. Projection: Albers Equal-Area Conic. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Q: What if the map is a digital scan of an older printed map? How do I

cite that in Chicago style author–date?

A: When citing a digital scan of an older printed map, you should acknowledge both the original map and the digital source. For example: Original Author. Original Year. Original Map Title. [Digital scan]. Available from [Digital Repository Name or URL]; accessed [Date of access].

Q: How do I format the reference list for multiple maps cited using Chicago style author–date?

A: The reference list should be alphabetized by the author's last name or the title if no author is given. Each entry should include all the necessary bibliographic information: author, year, title, publisher, and location or URL, formatted according to Chicago Manual of Style guidelines for maps.

Q: Is there a difference in citing a map found in a research paper versus a map used as the primary source for the paper?

A: Yes, there can be a difference in emphasis. If a map is the primary source, you will cite it thoroughly as described in this article. If a map is cited as a source within another work (like a book or article), you might cite the book or article that contains the map, and then potentially provide details about the map within that citation if it's significant. However, for clarity, it's often best to locate and cite the original map if possible.

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