

chicago style citing maps

Understanding Chicago Style Citing Maps: A Comprehensive Guide

chicago style citing maps are an essential component for researchers, academics, and anyone needing to accurately attribute the origin of geographical information within their work. Whether you're referencing a historical atlas, a contemporary online map, or a digital geospatial dataset, proper citation ensures academic integrity and allows readers to locate and verify your sources. This guide provides a detailed exploration of how to cite maps in Chicago style, covering various map types and common citation scenarios. We will delve into the core components of a Chicago-style map citation, discuss specific considerations for different formats, and offer practical advice for ensuring accuracy and clarity. Mastering these principles will elevate your research and demonstrate a commitment to scholarly best practices.

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The Fundamentals of Chicago Style Map Citation

Chicago style, also known as the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), offers a robust framework for academic and scholarly writing. When it comes to citing visual materials like maps, the underlying principles of providing sufficient information for retrieval and attribution remain paramount. The goal is to clearly identify the map, its creator, its publication details, and its accessibility, mirroring the rigor applied to textual sources.

Understanding the nuances of Chicago style map citation is crucial because maps are not merely illustrations; they are primary sources of information that often embody a specific perspective, purpose, and historical context. Failing to cite them correctly can lead to misattribution, plagiarism, and a diminished credibility of your research. This section lays the groundwork for understanding why precise citation is so vital.

Essential Elements of a Map Citation

Regardless of the map's format, several core pieces of information are generally required for a Chicago-style citation. These elements work together to create a complete and unambiguous reference, allowing your readers to find the exact map you consulted.

Author or Creator of the Map

The author of a map is typically the cartographer, surveying company, government agency, or individual responsible for its creation. If no specific author is listed, you will often find the name of the publishing body or institution.

Title of the Map

This is the name given to the map itself. It's crucial to record the title accurately, including any subtitles. If the map has no title, you will use a descriptive phrase in square brackets, such as "[Map of the San Juan Islands]".

Publication Information

This includes the place of publication, the publisher's name, and the year of publication. For older maps, this information might be found in the map's legend or border. For digital maps, this might refer to the website or platform where it is hosted.

Scale and Edition

The scale of a map (e.g., 1:24,000) indicates the ratio of distance on the map to distance on the ground. The edition number or date is also important, especially for maps that are regularly updated, such as topographical maps or atlases.

Locator Information

This refers to how the map can be found within a larger work, such as an atlas, a book, or a digital archive. For printed maps, this might include page numbers or plate numbers. For online maps, this will include URLs and access dates.

Citing Printed Maps in Chicago Style

Printed maps, whether they are standalone items or part of a larger publication, require careful attention to their bibliographical details. The Chicago Manual of Style provides guidelines that emphasize accuracy in transcribing the map's identifying features.

Standalone Printed Maps

When citing a map that exists as a single sheet, the citation should include the creator, title, publisher, place of publication, year, and scale. For instance:

- Author/Creator. *Title of Map*. Scale. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year.

Example:

- United States Geological Survey. *Topographic Map: Mount Rainier, Washington*. Scale 1:100,000. Denver, CO: USGS, 2010.

Maps within Books or Atlases

If the map is part of a book or an atlas, you will cite it in relation to the larger work. The citation typically includes the map's title and location within the book, followed by the bibliographic details of the book or atlas itself.

For maps within books:

- Author/Creator of Map. "Title of Map." In *Title of Book*, page numbers. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year.

Example:

- Smith, John. "Map of Colonial Settlements." In *Early American Geography*, 45-47. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

For maps within atlases, the process is similar, often referencing the atlas's editors and specific map details.

Citing Digital Maps and Online Resources

The proliferation of digital maps and geospatial data presents unique challenges and opportunities for citation. Chicago style offers flexible approaches to handle these evolving resources.

Web-Based Maps and Interactive Platforms

Citing online maps, such as those found on Google Maps, Bing Maps, or specific geographic information system (GIS) platforms, requires providing a URL and the date of access. The creator and title are also essential components.

A common format is:

- Creator/Organization. "Title of Map or Feature." Description (e.g., Map). Publisher/Platform. Accessed Date. URL.

Example:

- Google. "Street Map of Downtown Chicago." Map. Google, 2023. Accessed October 26, 2023. <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Chicago/>.

It's important to be as specific as possible. If you are referencing a particular layer or dataset within an interactive map, try to include that information if available.

Geospatial Data and GIS Layers

When citing raw geospatial data or specific GIS layers used in analysis, you need to provide information about the data provider, the dataset name, version, and format, along with access details.

Example:

- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). "MODIS Vegetation Indices (MOD13Q1) V6.1." Data set. Accessed October 26, 2023. https://developers.google.com/earth-engine/datasets/catalog/MODIS_006_MOD13Q1.

Special Considerations for Geospatial Data

Geospatial data, often in the form of shapefiles, rasters, or geodatabases, forms the backbone of many modern spatial analyses. Citing these sources accurately is paramount for reproducibility and intellectual honesty.

Data Source and Metadata

When citing geospatial data, always aim to include information about the original source of the data, including the organization that collected or compiled it, the specific name of the dataset, and any relevant versioning or update information. Metadata, which describes the data's characteristics, projection, and lineage, is invaluable and should be consulted for citation details.

Projection and Coordinate System

While not always explicitly required in every Chicago citation, understanding and potentially noting the projection and coordinate system used in the geospatial data can be critical for researchers replicating your work, especially in technical or scientific contexts. This level of detail can sometimes be included in a descriptive note or within the body of your text.

Availability and Access

Just as with other online resources, it's essential to provide clear information on how the geospatial data can be accessed, including the URL or repository name and the date of access. This ensures that others can retrieve the exact data you used.

Footnotes vs. Bibliographies for Maps

Chicago style offers two primary citation systems: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. For citing maps, the principles apply similarly to both, but the presentation differs.

Notes-Bibliography System

In the notes-bibliography system, detailed citations for maps appear in footnotes or endnotes. The bibliography then provides a condensed, alphabetized list of all sources consulted. For maps, the footnote would contain the full citation details, while the bibliography entry would be a more concise version.

Footnote Example:

- 1. National Geographic Society, "World Political Map," In *Atlas of the World*, 12th ed. (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2020), 2-3.

Bibliography Example:

- National Geographic Society. "World Political Map." In *Atlas of the World*, 12th ed., 2-3. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2020.

Author-Date System

In the author-date system, parenthetical in-text citations refer to full entries in the reference list at the end of the document. For maps, this would involve a shortened in-text citation, often including the author/creator and year, followed by the full reference in the list.

In-text Citation Example:

(National Geographic Society 2020)

Reference List Example:

- National Geographic Society. 2020. "World Political Map." In *Atlas of the World*, 12th ed., 2-3. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society.

Common Challenges and Solutions in Citing Maps

Citing maps can sometimes be tricky due to incomplete information or the evolving nature of digital cartography. Here are some common challenges and how to address them.

Missing Author or Creator Information

If a map lacks a clear author or creator, use the name of the publishing organization or the entity responsible for its production. If no such information is available, you may need to use a descriptive title or a phrase like "Anonymous."

Vague Publication Dates

For older maps or those with unclear publication dates, use the most precise date available. If only a range of years or a general period is known, you can indicate that, for example, "ca. 1950" (circa 1950) or "1945-1955."

Complex Digital Resources

Interactive maps or dynamic web services can be challenging. The key is to be as specific as possible about the version of the map, the specific view or layer you are referencing, and the date you accessed it. If the platform allows for permalinks to specific views, use those.

Scale Representation

When dealing with maps where the scale is not explicitly stated, you may need to infer it or state that it is unknown. However, in most academic contexts, maps used for analytical purposes will have discernible scales, or their absence will be noted.

The Importance of Accuracy and Clarity

Ultimately, the most critical aspect of Chicago style citing maps, or any source, is accuracy and clarity. A well-crafted citation allows your readers to understand the provenance of the geographical information you present and to trace it back to its origin. This not only upholds academic integrity

but also strengthens the persuasive power of your arguments by demonstrating that your research is grounded in verifiable sources.

Consistent application of the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines, even in the face of complex or unusual map formats, will ensure that your work adheres to scholarly standards. Take the time to carefully examine each map and its accompanying information, and when in doubt, consult the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style for specific guidance.

Q: How do I cite a map I found on a website like Google Maps in Chicago style?

A: When citing a web-based map like Google Maps in Chicago style, you should include the creator (e.g., Google), the title of the map (e.g., "Street Map of [Location]"), the type of resource (e.g., Map), the publisher or platform, the date it was accessed, and the URL. For example: Google. "Street Map of Downtown Chicago." Map. Google, 2023. Accessed October 26, 2023.
<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Chicago/>.

Q: What if the map I'm citing doesn't have a clear author?

A: If a map lacks a clearly identified author or cartographer, you should use the name of the publishing organization or institution as the author. If no publisher or creator is evident, you can start the citation with the title of the map or use the term "Anonymous" if that is the only descriptor available, though attempting to identify a responsible entity is always preferable.

Q: Do I need to include the map's scale in my Chicago style citation?

A: Yes, it is generally recommended to include the map's scale if it is readily available. The scale (e.g., 1:24,000) provides important context about the level of detail and the geographic area covered by the map. For printed maps, this information is usually found within the map's legend or border.

Q: How do I cite a map that is part of a book or an atlas in Chicago style?

A: When citing a map within a book or atlas, you will cite the map as a component of the larger work. For a map in a book, the format might be: Author/Creator of Map. "Title of Map." In *Title of Book*, page numbers. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year. For an atlas, you would cite the atlas itself, noting the specific map title and page numbers within the atlas.

Q: Should I use footnotes or a bibliography for citing maps in Chicago style?

A: Chicago style offers two main systems: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. If you are using the notes-bibliography system, you will provide a full citation in a footnote or

endnote the first time you refer to a map, and a condensed version in the bibliography. If using the author-date system, you will have a parenthetical in-text citation referring to a full entry in your reference list.

Q: What if the map is a historical document with no modern publisher?

A: For historical maps, cite the creator, title, and any available publication details as you find them. If the map is housed in a specific archive or collection, include that information as well. For example: Cartographer Name. *Title of Map*. Original Publication Year. Collection Name, Institution, Location. If it's a reproduction, cite the source of the reproduction, including its publisher and year.

Q: How specific should I be when citing a digital map layer or GIS dataset?

A: For digital map layers or GIS datasets, be as specific as possible. Include the data provider, the official name of the dataset, its version number (if applicable), the file format, and the URL and date of access. For instance: National Weather Service. "Global Historical Climatology Network Daily (GHCN-D)." Dataset. Accessed October 26, 2023.
<https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/products/land-based-station/global-historical-climatology-network-daily>.

Q: What are the key differences in citing a physical map versus an online map?

A: The primary difference lies in the locator information. For a physical map, you would typically include publisher, place, and year. For an online map, you replace these with the website or platform name, the URL, and the date of access, as these resources are dynamic and can change or disappear. The core elements of creator and title remain consistent.

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