

# chicago style examples for citing online databases

## The Importance of Chicago Style Examples for Citing Online Databases

**chicago style examples for citing online databases** are crucial for academic integrity and ensuring your research is properly attributed. When navigating the complex world of scholarly research, especially when incorporating information from digital archives, digitized books, and specialized platforms, precise citation is paramount. The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) provides a robust framework for this, but its application to online databases can sometimes be nuanced. This article will delve into the intricacies of citing various types of online databases according to Chicago style, covering both footnote/endnote and bibliography formats. We will explore how to handle articles from databases, book chapters accessed online, and even entire databases, providing clear, actionable examples to guide your academic writing. Understanding these principles will not only enhance the credibility of your work but also empower you to efficiently manage your sources.

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## Understanding Chicago Style Citation for Online Databases

Chicago style, often referred to as the Chicago Manual of Style, is a widely used citation system in humanities and some social sciences. Its flexibility allows for two primary citation systems: the notes-bibliography system and the author-date system. For citing online databases, the notes-bibliography system, which utilizes footnotes or endnotes and a bibliography, is generally preferred for its ability to accommodate complex source information more gracefully. The challenge with online databases lies in their dynamic nature and the variety of content they contain. Unlike a physical book or journal, a database entry might have multiple authors, editors, or contributors, and the retrieval information can change. Therefore, a systematic approach is necessary to ensure accuracy and consistency.

The core principle behind citing any source, including those from online databases, is to provide enough information for a reader to locate the original material. This involves identifying the author, title, publication information, and crucially for online sources, the access point. With online databases, this access point is typically a URL or DOI. However, the Chicago Manual of Style also emphasizes the importance of stable identifiers, such as DOIs, over generic URLs when available, as they are more likely to remain consistent over time.

# Citing Articles from Online Databases

One of the most frequent scenarios involves citing articles retrieved from subscription-based academic databases like JSTOR, ProQuest, or EBSCOhost. The goal is to replicate the essential bibliographic information of the original publication while indicating its electronic origin. When an article has a print equivalent, you will generally cite it as you would the print version, but with the addition of the database name and access information.

## Footnote/Endnote Citation for Articles

The footnote or endnote citation for an article from an online database typically includes the author's name, the article title, the journal title, volume and issue numbers, the publication date, and page numbers. This is followed by the name of the database and the DOI or URL. If a DOI is available, it is always preferred over a URL for its stability.

Here's a typical structure:

- First Initial. Last Name, "Article Title," *Journal Title* Volume, no. Issue (Publication Year): Page(s), accessed Month Day, Year, DOI or URL.

For example:

1. Jane Doe, "The Evolution of the Printing Press," *Historical Review* 45, no. 2 (2010): 112, accessed October 26, 2023, doi:10.1086/789012.

If no DOI is available, use the URL. However, if the article is found via a stable link (sometimes provided by the database that includes a persistent identifier), that is preferable to a generic URL. It's also common practice in Chicago style to include the database name for clarity, especially if the article might be found in multiple databases.

2. John Smith, "Urban Development in the Renaissance," *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 4 (2004): 450-465, accessed October 26, 2023, ProQuest, [http://www.proquest.com/some\\_link\\_to\\_the\\_article](http://www.proquest.com/some_link_to_the_article).

## Bibliography Citation for Articles

The bibliography entry consolidates the same information but is formatted slightly differently, with the author's last name preceding their first name. The access date is generally omitted in bibliography entries unless the source is likely to change significantly or is unpaginated, as the assumption is that the reader can access it at any time.

Here's the corresponding bibliography structure:

- Last Name, First Initial. "Article Title." *Journal Title* Volume, no. Issue (Publication Year): Page(s). Accessed Month Day, Year (if necessary). DOI or URL.

Using the previous examples:

Doe, Jane. "The Evolution of the Printing Press." *Historical Review* 45, no. 2 (2010): 112. doi:10.1086/789012.

Smith, John. "Urban Development in the Renaissance." *Journal of Urban History* 30, no. 4 (2004):

450-465. Accessed October 26, 2023. ProQuest. [http://www.proquest.com/some\\_link\\_to\\_the\\_article](http://www.proquest.com/some_link_to_the_article).

## Citing Books and Book Chapters Accessed Through Online Databases

Many libraries provide access to full-text books and book chapters through online databases, such as those from Google Books, Project MUSE, or Dawsonera. The citation principles are similar to citing print books, but you must indicate the electronic source.

### Footnote/Endnote Citation for Books

When citing a book accessed through a database, you will cite it as you would a print book, including author, title, publication city, publisher, and year. Then, you add the database name and the URL or stable link.

Structure:

- Author's Full Name, *Book Title* (Publication City: Publisher, Year), Page(s), accessed Month Day, Year, Database Name, URL.

Example:

3. Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 87, accessed October 26, 2023, Google Books, [https://books.google.com/books?id=some\\_id\\_here](https://books.google.com/books?id=some_id_here).

If citing a specific chapter, you'd include the chapter title and number.

4. Sarah Johnson, "Introduction: The Digital Age," in *Perspectives on Modern Technology*, ed. David Lee (London: TechPress, 2015), 15, accessed October 26, 2023, Project MUSE, <http://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/123456>.

### Bibliography Citation for Books

The bibliography entry for an e-book accessed through a database follows the same pattern, with the author's last name first. Again, the access date is typically omitted unless the source is ephemeral or has no stable identifier.

Structure:

- Last Name, First Name. *Book Title*. Publication City: Publisher, Year. Page(s). Accessed Month Day, Year (if necessary). Database Name. URL.

Examples:

Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006. Accessed October 26, 2023. Google Books. [https://books.google.com/books?id=some\\_id\\_here](https://books.google.com/books?id=some_id_here).

Johnson, Sarah. "Introduction: The Digital Age." In *Perspectives on Modern Technology*, edited by

David Lee, 15. London: TechPress, 2015. Accessed October 26, 2023. Project MUSE.  
<http://muse.jhu.edu/chapter/123456>.

## Citing Entire Online Databases

Occasionally, you may need to cite an entire online database, especially if you are discussing the database itself as a research tool or referencing its overall content without focusing on a specific article or book. This is less common than citing individual components but is important to understand.

## Footnote/Endnote Citation for Databases

When citing the database as a whole, you need to identify the organization that hosts or publishes it, the database name, and its URL. If there is a specific version or update date, include that information.

Structure:

- Organization Name, "Database Name," accessed Month Day, Year, URL.

Example:

5. JSTOR, "JSTOR: The Global Resources Network," accessed October 26, 2023,  
<https://www.jstor.org>.

If a specific section or interface is particularly relevant, you might mention that.

6. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, accessed October 26, 2023,  
<https://www.proquest.com/products-services/dissertations-theses-global.html>.

## Bibliography Citation for Databases

In the bibliography, the entry will follow a similar pattern, focusing on identifying the resource for retrieval.

Structure:

- Organization Name. "Database Name." Accessed Month Day, Year. URL.

Examples:

JSTOR. "JSTOR: The Global Resources Network." Accessed October 26, 2023. <https://www.jstor.org>.

ProQuest. "ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global." Accessed October 26, 2023.  
<https://www.proquest.com/products-services/dissertations-theses-global.html>.

# Key Elements of a Chicago Style Database Citation

Regardless of the specific type of content you are citing from an online database, several key elements remain consistent in Chicago style. Paying close attention to these components ensures your citations are both accurate and complete, adhering to the established scholarly standards.

- **Author:** This is the individual or group responsible for the content (article, book, etc.).
- **Title of Work:** This refers to the specific article, chapter, or book being cited.
- **Title of Container:** This is the name of the database (e.g., JSTOR, ProQuest, EBSCOhost) or the website if it's a publicly accessible resource.
- **Publication Information:** This includes journal title, volume, issue, and publication year for articles, or publisher and publication year for books.
- **Page Numbers:** Specific page numbers for the material you referenced.
- **Access Date:** The date you accessed the online material. This is particularly important for sources that may be updated or removed.
- **Locator Information:** This is crucial for online sources and typically includes a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) or a URL. DOIs are preferred due to their stability.

## Common Pitfalls to Avoid in Database Citation

Navigating the nuances of citing online databases can lead to common mistakes. Awareness of these pitfalls can help you maintain accuracy and adherence to Chicago style guidelines. One frequent error is omitting the access date for resources that might change. While it's often excluded for stable publications, many online database entries are subject to modification or removal, making the access date a vital piece of information.

Another common oversight is failing to differentiate between a general URL and a stable link or DOI. Generic URLs can break easily, making them unreliable for retrieval. Always prioritize DOIs, stable links provided by the database, or, as a last resort, the most specific URL you can find. Furthermore, inconsistency in formatting between footnotes/endnotes and the bibliography is a frequent issue. Ensure you are meticulously following the distinct formatting rules for each, particularly regarding author names and punctuation.

Finally, not providing enough information to locate the source is a significant problem. Readers should be able to find exactly what you referenced. This means including the database name, and when necessary, the specific search terms or path used to find the item, although this is less common in standard Chicago style unless the source is particularly obscure. Always aim for clarity and comprehensiveness in your citations.

Properly citing online databases in Chicago style is an essential skill for any researcher. By understanding the core principles and applying the specific examples for articles, books, and entire databases, you can ensure your work is credible and easily verifiable. Remember to prioritize stable identifiers like DOIs and to meticulously follow the formatting guidelines for both footnotes/endnotes

and your bibliography. This attention to detail will not only enhance your writing but also contribute to the overall quality and trustworthiness of your research endeavors.

## FAQ Section

### **Q: What is the most important element to include when citing an article from an online database in Chicago style?**

A: The most important elements are typically the author, article title, journal title, publication details (volume, issue, year), page numbers, and a stable locator such as a DOI or a reliable URL. The DOI is preferred for its persistence.

### **Q: Should I always include the access date when citing sources from online databases?**

A: In Chicago style's notes-bibliography system, you should include the access date for online sources that are considered ephemeral, likely to change, or have no stable pagination or publication date. For articles from stable academic databases that are unlikely to change, the access date is often omitted in the bibliography but may be included in footnotes/endnotes for clarity, especially if the source is not archived.

### **Q: How do I cite a book chapter found in a database like ProQuest Ebooks?**

A: You would cite it much like a print book chapter, including the chapter author, chapter title, book title, editors (if any), publication information for the book, and then the database name and URL or stable link where you accessed it.

### **Q: What is a DOI, and why is it important for citing online databases?**

A: A DOI (Digital Object Identifier) is a persistent, unique identifier for digital objects. It's crucial for citing online databases because it provides a stable link to the content, meaning it's less likely to break or change over time compared to a standard URL, making it easier for readers to locate the exact source.

### **Q: Is there a difference in how I cite a journal article found in JSTOR versus a general website?**

A: Yes, there is a significant difference. Journal articles from databases like JSTOR are cited with their full bibliographic information (author, article title, journal title, volume, issue, year, page numbers) followed by the database and locator. A general website citation focuses on the author/organization, page/article title, website name, and URL, often without specific publication details like volume or issue numbers.

## **Q: What if the online database does not provide a DOI for the article?**

A: If no DOI is available, you should provide the most specific and stable URL possible. If the database offers a "stable link" or "permalink," use that in preference to a generic URL generated from a search session.

## **Q: How do I cite an entire online database in Chicago style for my bibliography?**

A: To cite an entire database, you typically include the name of the organization that publishes or hosts it, the name of the database, and its URL. Include an access date if the database is updated frequently or is considered a dynamic resource.

## **Q: What information should I include if I'm citing a newspaper article found online through a database?**

A: For a newspaper article found online through a database, include the author (if known), article title, newspaper title, publication date, and page number (if applicable), followed by the database name and the URL or DOI. The Chicago Manual of Style often treats online newspapers similarly to online journal articles in terms of required access information.

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