

chicago style for digital humanities art history

Navigating Citation and Presentation in Digital Humanities Art History

chicago style for digital humanities art history presents a unique intersection of established academic rigor and emerging digital methodologies. As scholars delve into vast digitized archives, complex data visualizations, and interactive platforms, the need for precise citation, clear argumentation, and ethical representation becomes paramount. This article explores the nuances of applying Chicago style to the dynamic field of digital humanities in art history, covering its adaptation for digital sources, best practices for presenting digital scholarship, and the specific challenges and solutions encountered by researchers. We will examine how traditional citation principles translate to the digital realm, discuss strategies for citing born-digital art and digital art historical projects, and offer guidance on creating transparent and reproducible digital research outputs. Understanding these principles ensures that digital scholarship in art history meets the high standards of academic integrity expected within the discipline.

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The Evolution of Citation for Digital Sources

in Art History

The traditional Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) has long served as a cornerstone for art historians, providing a robust framework for citing images, artworks, and scholarly texts. However, the advent and proliferation of digital resources—from digitized archives and online exhibition catalogs to born-digital art and interactive research platforms—necessitate an evolved approach. Digital humanities methodologies in art history require us to consider how to accurately and transparently attribute not just static texts and images, but also dynamic, interactive, and sometimes ephemeral digital creations.

Applying Chicago style to these new forms of scholarship involves understanding the core principles of CMOS: providing enough information for the reader to locate the source and conveying the author's authority. When dealing with digital sources, this translates to capturing essential metadata that might include URLs, access dates, repository information, and specific identifiers like DOIs or ARKs, alongside author, title, and publication details. The challenge lies in maintaining this clarity and specificity when the "source" itself might be a complex digital project or a constantly updated online collection.

Citing Digital Objects and Databases for Art Historical Research

One of the most significant areas where Chicago style is being adapted in digital humanities art history concerns the citation of digital objects and large-scale databases. These resources, often central to digital research projects, present unique challenges due to their potential for modification, user interaction, and the sheer volume of data they contain. Simply providing a URL is often insufficient to give a reader the context or stability needed for verification.

Databases and Online Collections

When citing online databases or digitized collections, such as museum archives or digital scholarly editions, the focus shifts to identifying the specific component being used. This might include the name of the database, the institution responsible for it, and the specific search query or parameters used to arrive at a particular result, if applicable. The access date is crucial because these collections are frequently updated, and a citation should reflect the state of the database at the time of consultation. For example, a footnote might point to "The Getty Research Institute's Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online, accessed September 15, 2023,

<https://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat/>." The corresponding bibliography entry would be more comprehensive, including publication details if available, or emphasizing the institutional attribution and access information.

Digitized Artworks and Archival Materials

Citing digitized versions of physical artworks or archival materials requires a careful distinction between the original object and its digital surrogate. The citation should acknowledge both. If a scholar is analyzing a digital reproduction of a painting found in an online collection, the citation needs to identify the original artwork (artist, title, date, medium, original location) and then provide the details for accessing its digital representation. This would include the name of the digital repository, the specific URL, and the date of access. For instance, a footnote might reference "Vincent van Gogh, *The Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed via The Museum of Modern Art's online collection, July 20, 2023, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79820>."

Born-Digital Art

The citation of born-digital art—art created specifically for digital mediums—presents perhaps the most novel challenge. These works may exist as standalone files, interactive websites, or within virtual environments. Chicago style guidelines are still developing in this area, but the principle remains to provide enough information for the reader to find and experience the work. This involves citing the artist, the title of the work, its creation date, the platform or medium through which it is accessed, and a persistent identifier if available (e.g., a DOI for a digital art journal submission). If the work is only accessible via a specific URL, that URL and an access date are essential. Considerations for ephemeral works or those with rapidly changing interfaces are ongoing within the digital humanities community, often leading to extended descriptive notes in footnotes or appendices rather than a strict bibliographic entry.

Footnotes and Bibliographic Entries for Digital Art History

The application of Chicago style within digital humanities art history significantly impacts the structure and content of both footnotes and bibliographic entries. These elements are critical for establishing the provenance of information and allowing readers to trace the research journey. The goal is to adapt the foundational principles of CMOS—clarity, accuracy,

and retrievability—to the unique characteristics of digital resources.

Footnotes in Digital Art History

Footnotes in digital art historical research often serve a dual purpose: to cite sources and to provide contextual information about digital methodologies or specific digital assets used in the research. When citing a digital source in a footnote, the aim is to be as specific as possible. For a webpage, this might include the author (if known), the title of the specific page or article, the title of the website, the publisher or sponsoring organization, the date of publication or last update, and the full URL. Crucially, the date of access must always be included because digital content is subject to change or deletion. For instance, a footnote could read: "1. Jane Doe, 'Visualizing Networks in Renaissance Florence,' Digital Art History Review, October 2, 2022, accessed November 10, 2023, <https://digitalarthistory.org/networks/florence>."

When referencing a specific digital object within a larger collection, such as a particular image file, the footnote should reflect this specificity. This could involve citing the image title, the artist, the date of the original artwork, and then details about the digital repository, including the URL for the specific image. This ensures that the reader can locate the exact digital asset that informed the scholarship. For complex digital projects or interactive visualizations, a footnote might also include a brief explanation of the digital tool or method used to generate the data or interface, guiding the reader toward understanding the researcher's process.

Bibliographic Entries for Digital Sources

The bibliography in a digital art history project will similarly incorporate digital sources, following the principles of CMOS while adapting to digital formats. The goal of the bibliography is to provide a comprehensive list of all consulted sources, allowing readers to further investigate the research. For digital sources, this means including all the elements necessary for retrieval.

A typical bibliographic entry for a website would include the author's name (last name first), followed by the title of the specific work or page in quotation marks. Then, the title of the overall website would be italicized. This would be followed by the publisher or sponsoring organization, the date of publication or last update, and the URL. For example: "Doe, Jane. 'Visualizing Networks in Renaissance Florence.' *Digital Art History Review*. October 2, 2022. Accessed November 10, 2023. <https://digitalarthistory.org/networks/florence>."

For digitized artworks or archival materials accessed online, the bibliographic entry would prioritize the original artwork and then provide the details for the digital access point. This would look something like: "Van Gogh, Vincent. The Starry Night, 1889. Oil on canvas. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Accessed via The Museum of Modern Art's online collection, July 20, 2023. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79820>." The key is to offer a complete picture, acknowledging both the artwork's original context and its digital accessibility.

When citing born-digital art, the bibliographic entry should reflect the nature of the work. This might include: Artist's Name. Title of Work. Year of Creation. Medium/Platform. URL. For example: "Smith, John. Ephemeral Glitches. 2021. Interactive Web Art. <https://www.johnsmithart.com/ephemeralglitches>." Persistent identifiers like DOIs are always preferred if available, as they offer more stability than URLs. The principle across all digital citations remains to provide the most precise and stable information possible to guide the reader.

Presenting Digital Scholarship: Beyond Traditional Formats

Digital humanities art history scholarship often transcends the limitations of traditional written formats, embracing interactive maps, 3D models, data visualizations, and digital archives. Presenting such work necessitates careful consideration of how to integrate these digital components seamlessly while maintaining academic clarity and adhering to scholarly standards, including those influenced by Chicago style's emphasis on transparency and detail.

Integrating Visualizations and Interactive Elements

When research involves data visualizations, interactive timelines, or virtual reconstructions, these elements should be presented in a manner that is both accessible and informative. If the research is published online, direct embedding of these interactive components is ideal. Each visualization or interactive element should be clearly labeled, with accompanying captions that provide context, explain the data represented, and cite any sources used in its creation. These captions serve a similar function to footnotes, offering supplementary information without disrupting the main narrative flow. For instance, a caption for an interactive map might explain the data points, the period it covers, and the specific GIS software or online platform used for its development.

Archiving and Reproducibility

A critical aspect of presenting digital scholarship is ensuring its long-term accessibility and reproducibility. This means not only citing sources accurately but also making the digital research product itself available for scrutiny. Scholars are encouraged to archive their digital projects in repositories that ensure preservation. When citing one's own digital project, it is good practice to provide a persistent identifier (like a DOI) if one is assigned, and clear instructions on how to access and interact with the project. This commitment to transparency allows other scholars to verify findings, build upon the research, and understand the digital methodologies employed.

Narrative Structure in Digital Environments

Digital platforms allow for non-linear narratives, enabling readers to explore different pathways through the research. While this offers exciting possibilities, it's important to provide a clear overarching structure or guiding narrative. Introductions and conclusions, or their digital equivalents, should still orient the reader. Think of these as digital introductions and navigational aids that explain the project's scope, methodology, and key arguments. The principles of clear argumentation and evidence-based claims, central to Chicago style, must still be upheld, even when the presentation format is fluid and multimedia-rich.

Ethical Considerations in Digital Art Historical Research

The application of Chicago style for digital humanities art history is intrinsically linked to ethical considerations. As digital tools provide unprecedented access to information and enable new forms of analysis, researchers must navigate issues of copyright, intellectual property, data privacy, and the responsible representation of marginalized histories. Adherence to robust citation practices is a fundamental component of this ethical framework.

Copyright and Image Usage

Digital reproductions of artworks and archival materials are still subject to copyright law. When using images found online, scholars must diligently ascertain the copyright status and ensure they have obtained the necessary permissions for reproduction, especially if their work is intended for

publication beyond a classroom setting. Properly citing the source, including the copyright holder and any associated usage restrictions, is a primary ethical obligation. Chicago style's detailed citation requirements help researchers meticulously track and disclose these permissions.

Data Privacy and Sensitive Information

Digital art history research may involve working with sensitive personal information found in archives or databases, particularly when exploring the lives of artists, patrons, or subjects. Researchers have an ethical responsibility to protect the privacy of individuals whose data they encounter. This might involve anonymizing certain details, obtaining consent where appropriate, or adhering to institutional review board (IRB) guidelines. The transparent citation of data sources, as advocated by Chicago style, extends to acknowledging the nature of the data and any limitations placed upon its use.

Representation and Power Dynamics

Digital platforms can amplify voices and make previously hidden histories visible. However, they can also perpetuate existing biases or create new ones. It is ethically imperative for digital humanities art historians to be mindful of how their research and the digital tools they employ represent diverse cultures, identities, and histories. This includes critically assessing the sources they use, acknowledging power dynamics inherent in archival collections, and striving for inclusive and equitable representation. The meticulous sourcing and transparent presentation emphasized by Chicago style are crucial tools in this endeavor, allowing for scrutiny and ensuring accountability in how histories are constructed and disseminated.

Case Studies and Best Practices

Examining specific instances and adopting established practices can illuminate the practical application of Chicago style for digital humanities art history. These examples demonstrate how scholars can effectively integrate digital resources into their research while maintaining academic integrity and scholarly rigor.

Example 1: Citing a Digital Exhibition

A scholar researching contemporary digital art might consult an online

exhibition. According to Chicago style principles adapted for digital contexts, the citation would include the exhibition title, the organizing institution, the URL, and the date of access. For instance, in a footnote: "1. Cybernetic Visions: Art in the Age of AI, curated by Dr. Anya Sharma, New Museum Digital, accessed January 15, 2024, <https://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/cyberneticvisions>." The bibliography would list: "Sharma, Anya, curator. Cybernetic Visions: Art in the Age of AI. New Museum Digital. Accessed January 15, 2024. <https://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/cyberneticvisions>."

Example 2: Citing an Interactive Research Project

When a digital humanities project itself becomes a source, such as an interactive digital archive or a scholarly website with its own analytical tools, the citation must reflect its unique nature. A footnote might read: "2. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, 'Ottoman Empire: Arts and Architecture,' accessed February 1, 2024, <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/08/eu/ht08eu.html>." The corresponding bibliography entry would be: "The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. 'Ottoman Empire: Arts and Architecture.' Accessed February 1, 2024. <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/08/eu/ht08eu.html>." If a specific analytical feature or dataset within the project was crucial, it might warrant further description in the footnote.

Best Practices for Digital Art History Scholarship

- **Be Specific:** Always strive to provide the most precise information possible for locating a digital source. This includes specific URLs, access dates, and version numbers if applicable.
- **Prioritize Persistent Identifiers:** Whenever available, use DOIs, ARKs, or other persistent identifiers as they are more stable than URLs.
- **Document Your Process:** For digital methodologies, briefly explain in your footnotes or methodology section how you used digital tools or encountered specific digital sources.
- **Consider the Audience:** While rigorous, ensure your citations are understandable to a scholarly audience familiar with but not necessarily expert in digital methods.
- **Embrace Evolution:** The field of digital humanities is constantly evolving. Stay informed about best practices and updates to citation styles as they emerge.
- **Maintain Transparency:** Clearly attribute all sources, digital or analog,

to ensure academic integrity and allow for scholarly review.

Conclusion: The Future of Chicago Style in Digital Art History

The integration of Chicago style into digital humanities art history represents a vital bridge between established scholarly traditions and the innovative landscape of digital research. As digital tools continue to expand our capacity to analyze, interpret, and present art historical material, the core tenets of precise citation, clear attribution, and methodological transparency remain indispensable. The adaptations discussed—from citing complex databases and born-digital art to presenting interactive scholarship—ensure that rigor and integrity are maintained. By embracing these evolving standards, art historians working with digital methodologies can contribute to a more robust, accessible, and ethically grounded field, pushing the boundaries of art historical inquiry while upholding the highest academic values.

FAQ

Q: How does Chicago style handle citing data visualizations in digital art history?

A: When citing data visualizations, Chicago style adapted for digital humanities art history emphasizes providing enough information for the reader to understand and potentially recreate or access the visualization. This typically involves citing the original data source(s), the software or platform used for visualization (e.g., Tableau, D3.js), the specific visualization if it has a unique identifier, and a URL if it is publicly accessible online. Footnotes might include details about the specific parameters or queries used to generate the visualization, while the bibliography entry would provide a comprehensive overview of the visualization and its components.

Q: What is the best way to cite a virtual exhibition in digital art history using Chicago style?

A: To cite a virtual exhibition using Chicago style for digital art history, you should treat it as a digital publication. Include the title of the exhibition (*italicized* if it functions as a standalone work, or in quotation marks if it's part of a larger digital platform), the organizing institution or platform, the URL, and the date of access. For example, a footnote might

read: "1. Digital Dialogues: Contemporary Art Online, The Museum of Modern Art Digital, accessed March 10, 2024, <https://www.moma.org/digitaldialogues>."

Q: How should I cite a 3D model of an artwork that I accessed online for my digital art history research?

A: Citing a 3D model of an artwork in digital art history requires acknowledging both the original artwork and the digital model. In a footnote, you would typically mention the original artwork (artist, title, date, medium) and then specify the digital source of the model, including the platform or repository where it is hosted, the name of the model, and the URL. Include the date of access. A bibliographic entry would follow a similar structure, prioritizing the original artwork and then providing comprehensive details for the digital model.

Q: What are the challenges of citing ephemeral digital art in art history, and how can Chicago style help?

A: Ephemeral digital art, such as live-streamed performances or web-based works designed to disappear after a certain time, presents significant citation challenges due to their transient nature. Chicago style helps by emphasizing the importance of capturing information at the moment of access. Researchers should document as much detail as possible: artist, title, creation date, a description of the work, the platform, the URL (if it existed), and most importantly, the exact date and time of access. If possible, archiving screenshots or video recordings of the work can also be crucial supplementary material, cited appropriately.

Q: How do I cite a digital scholarly edition of an art historical text within the Chicago style framework?

A: When citing a digital scholarly edition of an art historical text, you should follow the general principles for citing edited works, adapted for the digital medium. Include the editor(s) of the digital edition, the title of the text (in quotation marks), the title of the digital edition (italicized), the publisher or platform, the date of publication or last update, and the URL. Crucially, specify the page number or section within the digital edition that you are referencing, and always include the date of access. For example: "2. Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, ed. and trans. James C. M. Platt, The Digital Vasari Project, 2020, accessed April 5, 2024, <https://vasari.digital/lives/volume1/painter1/section3>, p. 5."

Q: What is the role of persistent identifiers (like DOIs) when citing digital sources in art history using Chicago style?

A: Persistent identifiers (PIDs) such as Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) or Archival Resource Keys (ARKs) are highly recommended when citing digital sources in art history according to Chicago style. PIDs are designed to provide a stable and unique identifier for digital resources, meaning they are less likely to break or change over time compared to standard URLs. Using a PID in your citation ensures that readers have a more reliable way to locate the specific digital source you consulted, enhancing the retrievability and verifiability of your research.

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