

chicago manual of style geographic research

The Chicago Manual of Style geographic research: Navigating the intricacies of citing and presenting geographical data is a crucial aspect of academic and professional writing. This comprehensive guide delves into the specific conventions outlined in the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) for handling geographic information, ensuring clarity, accuracy, and adherence to scholarly standards. We will explore how CMOS addresses the citation of maps, the formatting of place names, the referencing of spatial data, and the proper attribution of sources in the context of research involving geographical elements. Understanding these guidelines is paramount for researchers aiming to produce polished and credible work, particularly in fields like history, geography, anthropology, and urban planning where geographic context is fundamental.

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Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style's Approach to Geographic Research

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS), in its various editions, provides a robust framework for academic writing, encompassing a wide range of citation and stylistic practices. When it comes to geographic research, CMOS offers specific guidance to ensure that geographical information is presented consistently and accurately. This is vital because geographical data, whether it's a specific location, a historical map, or a modern spatial dataset, forms the bedrock of many research projects. The manual prioritizes clarity and reader comprehension, meaning that even complex geographic references should be presented in a way that is easily understood by anyone engaging with the research. This involves not only how to cite a source but also how to describe geographic entities within the text itself.

Researchers engaging with geographical topics often grapple with the nuances of identifying and referencing places, especially when dealing with historical shifts in nomenclature or administrative boundaries. CMOS provides principles that guide these decisions, promoting a standardized approach. This standardization is essential for the credibility and reproducibility of research. Whether you are a historian detailing the territorial expansion of

an empire or a geographer analyzing urban sprawl, the principles laid out in CMOS serve as a reliable compass for presenting your geographic findings.

Citing Maps and Atlases in Chicago Style

Properly citing maps and atlases is a fundamental component of Chicago Manual of Style geographic research. Unlike books or journal articles, maps and atlases often have unique elements that require specific attention in citation. These can include the cartographer, the publisher, the year of publication, and the scale. CMOS generally recommends treating maps and atlases as distinct entities within your bibliography and notes, providing enough information for a reader to locate the specific geographic representation being referenced.

Citing Individual Maps

When citing an individual map, whether it is a standalone item or part of a larger collection, the Chicago Manual of Style emphasizes providing key identifying details. This typically includes the title of the map (often italicized), the publisher or issuing agency, the place of publication, and the date of publication. If known, the cartographer or engraver should also be included. For maps found online or within digital archives, details such as the URL and access date are crucial additions to the citation. The goal is to be as precise as possible, allowing a reader to find the exact map you consulted.

Citing Atlases and Map Collections

Citing an entire atlas or a collection of maps follows a similar pattern but focuses on the overall work. The title of the atlas is italicized, followed by the editor or compiler if applicable, the place of publication, the publisher, and the year. If you are referencing a specific map within an atlas, your note or bibliography entry should also include the page number or map number where that specific map can be found. This level of detail is critical for academic rigor, especially when discussing specific cartographic representations of an area or period.

Formatting Place Names and Boundaries

The accurate and consistent formatting of place names and the delineation of geographic boundaries are essential for clarity in Chicago Manual of Style geographic research. CMOS offers guidance to avoid ambiguity, particularly when dealing with historical or evolving place names and administrative divisions. The overarching principle is to be clear and to inform the reader about the context of the place name being used.

Standardizing Place Names

When referring to specific locations, it is best practice to use the most commonly accepted and current name. However, in historical research, it may be necessary to use older names or to indicate former names. CMOS suggests that if a place name has changed significantly, it is advisable to provide the historical name in parentheses or in a footnote, along with the current name. For example, “Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg).” This practice ensures that readers familiar with either name can identify the location in question. Consistency in spelling and capitalization is also paramount.

Defining Geographic Boundaries

Clearly defining geographic boundaries is crucial, especially in studies involving territorial claims, administrative regions, or ecological zones. CMOS does not prescribe a single universal method for defining boundaries in text, but it emphasizes the need for precision and context. If boundaries are being described based on specific treaties, legislation, or cartographic representations, these sources should be clearly cited. For academic work, using established geographical conventions for delineating areas, such as referencing political borders, watersheds, or survey lines, is recommended. When presenting maps that illustrate boundaries, ensure that the map itself is clearly labeled and properly cited according to the guidelines for maps.

Referencing Spatial Data and GIS

The advent of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the widespread availability of spatial data have introduced new dimensions to Chicago Manual of Style geographic research. Referencing these digital resources requires an understanding of how to cite data that is dynamic and often accessed through specific software or online platforms. CMOS acknowledges the evolving nature of digital information and provides principles applicable to citing datasets.

Citing GIS Datasets

When incorporating GIS datasets into your research, the citation should aim to identify the data source as precisely as possible. This typically includes the name of the dataset, the creator or provider (e.g., government agency, research institution), the version number if applicable, the date the data was created or last updated, and the URL or accession number if it was downloaded from an online repository. For instance, a citation might look like: “National Hydrography Dataset, United States Geological Survey, last updated 2023, accessed October 26, 2023, <http://nhd.usgs.gov/>.” The emphasis is on providing enough metadata for another researcher to find and potentially replicate the use of the data.

Referencing GIS Projects and Analyses

If your research involves specific GIS projects or analyses performed on spatial data, you should describe the methodology and cite the data and software used. For instance, if you conducted a spatial analysis using ArcGIS, you would typically note the software version and the specific tools or functions employed. The data sources feeding into this analysis would be cited as described above. This transparency allows readers to understand the technical basis of your geographic findings and to evaluate their reliability.

Citation Styles for Geographic Databases and Online Resources

Modern geographic research frequently relies on vast online databases and digital resources. The Chicago Manual of Style provides guidelines to ensure that these sources are cited accurately, even when they are not traditional print materials. Adhering to these principles is vital for giving credit to the creators of the data and for allowing readers to access the same information.

Online Geographic Databases

When citing online geographic databases, such as those from the United Nations, the World Bank, or specialized academic repositories, the citation should include the name of the database, the organization responsible for it, the date it was accessed, and the specific URL. If you are referencing a particular table or dataset within the larger database, you should include enough detail to identify that specific component. For example: "World Development Indicators, World Bank, accessed October 26, 2023, <https://databank.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>."

Geographic Websites and Portals

For websites or online portals that offer geographic information or tools, the citation should follow the general guidelines for citing websites. This includes the name of the website, the author or sponsoring organization, the title of the specific page or section if applicable, the date of publication or last update, and the URL. If an access date is necessary due to the potentially ephemeral nature of the content, it should also be included. For instance: "National Atlas of the United States, U.S. Geological Survey, last modified August 15, 2023, accessed October 26, 2023, <https://nationalmap.gov/nationalatlas.html>."

Geographic Research in Footnotes and Endnotes

In Chicago style, footnotes and endnotes serve as the primary mechanism for providing detailed citations and supplementary information without disrupting the flow of the main text. For Chicago Manual of Style geographic research, these notes are particularly important for elaborating on geographic details, providing context for place names, or citing specific maps or datasets used in the narrative.

Detailed Source Attribution

When a piece of geographic information or a specific visualization is presented in the text, the corresponding footnote or endnote should provide a complete citation. This ensures that every piece of borrowed material is properly attributed. For example, if a passage discusses the population density of a particular region based on a specific census report, the footnote would include the author (if any), title of the report, publisher, year, and page number. If a map is referenced to illustrate a historical boundary, the note would detail the map's source, title, and publication information.

Explaining Geographic Nuances

Footnotes and endnotes are also ideal for clarifying complex geographic concepts or providing additional context that might not be essential for the main text but is valuable for the reader. This could include explaining the historical evolution of a place name, detailing the methodology used to define a geographic area, or providing the exact coordinates for a specific point of interest. This allows the main body of the work to remain focused while still offering thoroughness in the presentation of geographic information.

Bibliography Entries for Geographic Sources

The bibliography in Chicago style provides a consolidated list of all sources consulted and cited in the work, including those pertaining to geographic research. The entries in the bibliography for geographic sources should be formatted consistently with other bibliography entries, aiming for clarity and completeness.

Structure of Geographic Bibliography Entries

Bibliography entries for maps, atlases, datasets, and geographic publications should follow the general structure outlined in CMOS. Typically, this involves the author or issuing agency (if applicable), followed by the title

(italicized for standalone works like atlases or maps, or in regular type for articles or reports), publication information (place, publisher, year), and any relevant access information for digital sources. For example, a bibliography entry for an atlas might appear as: Smith, John. Atlas of Historical Cities. New York: Academic Press, 2020.

Consistency in Formatting

Maintaining consistency in how geographic sources are listed in the bibliography is crucial. Whether you are citing a physical map from a library, a digital dataset downloaded from a government website, or an academic article discussing spatial patterns, the formatting for each type of source should align with the principles laid out in the Chicago Manual of Style. This uniformity enhances the professional presentation of the research and makes it easier for readers to navigate the cited materials. Special attention should be paid to the capitalization of place names and the precise details provided for digital resources.

The accurate and meticulous presentation of geographic information is integral to the integrity and impact of any research project. By diligently applying the guidelines of the Chicago Manual of Style for geographic research, writers can ensure their work is not only well-documented but also easily understood and credible. The attention to detail in citing maps, formatting place names, referencing spatial data, and constructing clear bibliography entries contributes significantly to the overall quality of scholarly and professional output, fostering trust and facilitating further inquiry in diverse academic and applied fields.

FAQ: Chicago Manual of Style Geographic Research

Q: How should I cite a map found in a book according to the Chicago Manual of Style?

A: When citing a map that appears within a book, you will generally cite the book as a whole, but you will also need to specify the page number where the map is located. The entry in your footnotes or endnotes would typically include the author and title of the book, publication information, and the page number of the map. In the bibliography, the book would be listed normally, and you would refer to the specific page number in your text or notes when discussing the map.

Q: What is the best way to handle historical place names that have changed in the Chicago Manual of

Style?

A: The Chicago Manual of Style recommends clarity and context when dealing with historical place names. If a place name has changed, it is advisable to use the current name in the text and provide the historical name in parentheses or in a footnote, along with the approximate period for which the historical name was in use. For example, "Constantinople (modern Istanbul) was a vital trade hub."

Q: How do I cite a specific geographic dataset downloaded from a government website using Chicago style?

A: To cite a geographic dataset downloaded from a government website, you should include the name of the dataset, the responsible government agency, the date of access, and the URL from which it was downloaded. If there is a specific version number or date associated with the dataset's creation or last update, include that as well. For instance: "Global Surface Temperature Anomalies, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, accessed October 26, 2023, <http://data.giss.nasa.gov/gistemp/>."

Q: Should I italicize geographic regions in my Chicago style paper?

A: Generally, geographic regions are not italicized unless they are part of a proper name that requires it (e.g., the Gobi Desert). Standard geographic names like continents, countries, states, cities, and common geographical features are typically not italicized. Consistency is key, so refer to the specific examples in the Chicago Manual of Style for guidance on unusual cases.

Q: How does the Chicago Manual of Style handle citations for GPS coordinates?

A: When citing GPS coordinates in Chicago style, the coordinates themselves should be presented clearly within the text or in a note, often with a reference to the source from which they were obtained. For example, you might write: "The research site was located at approximately 41.8781° N, 87.6298° W (Source: USGS)." The source citation would then be fully detailed in the footnote or bibliography entry.

Q: What are the best practices for citing historical maps that may have no clear author or publisher in

Chicago style?

A: For historical maps lacking a clear author or publisher, focus on providing as much identifying information as possible. This includes the title of the map (even if handwritten), the approximate date of creation, the material it is reproduced on (e.g., "lithograph," "engraving"), its current location (e.g., "part of the collection of the Library of Congress"), and any accession or catalog numbers. If the map is from an archive, cite the archive and the specific collection.

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