

chicago manual of style prehistory us

chicago manual of style prehistory us scholarship is a specialized field, and understanding its nuanced citation and stylistic requirements is paramount for academic integrity and clear communication. This article delves into the specific applications of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) within the context of United States prehistory, exploring how scholars navigate the challenges of citing archaeological evidence, oral traditions, and diverse sources. We will examine the fundamental principles of CMOS, its adaptation for prehistoric studies, and the critical importance of meticulous note-taking and bibliography construction when discussing early American inhabitants. Furthermore, we will address common pitfalls and best practices for researchers working with this unique historical period, ensuring their work adheres to the highest scholarly standards.

Table of Contents

- Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style's Relevance
- Core Principles of CMOS for Prehistory
- Navigating Source Materials in US Prehistory
- Citation Practices for Archaeological Evidence
- Incorporating Oral Traditions and Indigenous Knowledge
- Formatting and Style Guidelines
- Common Challenges and Solutions
- The Importance of a Comprehensive Bibliography

Understanding the Chicago Manual of Style's Relevance

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) serves as a foundational guide for academic writing across numerous disciplines, and its principles are particularly crucial when engaging with the complex and often fragmented evidence of United States prehistory. While CMOS is widely adopted in fields like history, literature, and the social sciences, its application to prehistoric studies requires a nuanced understanding of how to represent evidence that predates written records. Scholars in this field must grapple with a variety of source types, from material culture unearthed through archaeological excavation to the living traditions passed down through generations. The manual provides a robust framework for presenting this information clearly, consistently, and with appropriate scholarly attribution.

Adhering to CMOS ensures that research on US prehistory is accessible and credible to a wider academic audience. It establishes a shared language of citation and presentation, allowing readers to critically evaluate the evidence and arguments presented. Without standardized guidelines, the interpretation and dissemination of findings from this ancient past would be significantly more challenging, potentially leading to misinterpretations and a diffusion of knowledge. Therefore, a thorough grasp of CMOS is not merely a stylistic choice but a fundamental requirement for responsible scholarship in the study of early American peoples and their societies.

Core Principles of CMOS for Prehistory

The Chicago Manual of Style is built upon a foundation of clarity, accuracy, and consistency. For the study of United States prehistory, these principles translate into a rigorous approach to documenting and presenting information derived from non-textual or sparsely documented sources. The manual emphasizes the importance of detailed notes and bibliographies, which are indispensable when dealing with evidence that may not fit neatly into traditional archival categories. This includes accurately describing artifacts, their provenance, and the methodologies used in their analysis, as well as acknowledging the intellectual debts owed to previous researchers and indigenous knowledge holders.

One of the central tenets of CMOS relevant to prehistory is its flexible approach to note-taking, offering both endnotes and footnotes. For prehistoric research, endnotes can be particularly useful for providing extensive descriptions of archaeological contexts or detailing complex chronological frameworks without disrupting the flow of the main text. Similarly, the manual's guidance on the Chicago-style bibliography is paramount. It dictates how to list diverse materials, from peer-reviewed journal articles and excavation reports to museum catalog entries and unpublished dissertations, ensuring that all sources contributing to an understanding of US prehistory are appropriately credited and discoverable.

The Role of Footnotes and Endnotes

Footnotes and endnotes in CMOS serve as critical mechanisms for providing supplementary information and precise citations. In the study of United States prehistory, these notes are invaluable for detailing the exact location of an archaeological find, the specific dimensions and materials of an artifact, or the methodologies employed in radiocarbon dating. They allow for the inclusion of detailed data that might overwhelm the main narrative but is essential for scholarly verification. For instance, a researcher might use an endnote to list all the artifacts recovered from a specific stratum of an excavation site, including their accession numbers and the museum where they are housed.

Furthermore, notes are essential for referencing secondary literature that informs interpretations of prehistoric sites and cultures. When discussing theories about migration patterns or subsistence strategies, footnotes can direct readers to the specific publications that propose these ideas. This ensures that the author is not presenting theories as their own and that readers can access the original arguments. For scholars working with indigenous communities, notes also offer a sensitive way to acknowledge the contributions of elders and oral historians, citing their knowledge respectfully and in accordance with their wishes.

Crafting a Comprehensive Bibliography

The bibliography section in a work adhering to CMOS is more than just a list of references; it is a testament to the research conducted and a vital tool for academic engagement. For research on United States prehistory, the

bibliography must accommodate a broad spectrum of source types that go beyond conventional books and articles. This includes:

- Excavation reports detailing stratigraphy and artifact assemblages.
- Catalog entries from archaeological collections.
- Published and unpublished field notes from early archaeologists.
- Replication studies of ancient technologies.
- Oral history transcripts and recordings (with appropriate permissions and anonymization if necessary).
- Geological and paleoenvironmental data.
- Linguistic analyses of indigenous languages relevant to prehistoric populations.

Each entry must be meticulously formatted according to CMOS guidelines, providing enough information for a reader to locate the source. The consistency in formatting, from author names and publication dates to titles and location details, is a hallmark of scholarship guided by the Chicago Manual of Style. This diligence in bibliography construction fosters transparency and allows for the replication and further investigation of findings related to the prehistoric Americas.

Navigating Source Materials in US Prehistory

The study of United States prehistory presents unique challenges in terms of source material, as it largely relies on indirect evidence rather than written historical accounts. The Chicago Manual of Style provides a flexible framework for documenting these diverse sources, ensuring that the evidence is presented clearly and credibly. Scholars must be adept at translating archaeological findings, environmental data, and indigenous oral traditions into a format that aligns with CMOS principles of citation and style. This often involves detailed descriptive language and careful consideration of how to attribute knowledge derived from non-textual evidence.

The reliance on material culture, such as pottery sherds, lithic tools, and faunal remains, means that CMOS citation practices must accommodate the specific ways this evidence is documented. This includes referencing museum collections, excavation unit descriptions, and scientific analyses like radiocarbon dating or DNA sequencing. Moreover, the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems, often transmitted orally, requires a sensitive and accurate approach to citation that respects the cultural context and intellectual property rights of the knowledge holders. The manual's emphasis on thorough documentation is therefore a critical asset in navigating these complex evidentiary landscapes.

Documenting Archaeological Finds

Accurately documenting archaeological finds is central to any credible study of United States prehistory. This involves meticulously recording the context in which artifacts are discovered, as this context provides crucial information about their age, function, and cultural associations. CMOS guidelines encourage detailed descriptions that would typically appear in footnotes or endnotes, or in appendices for extensive data. This includes noting the specific site designation, the excavation unit or feature number, the stratigraphic layer (or stratum), and the precise location within that layer. For instance, a citation might read: "Excavation Unit 3B, Stratum IV, Feature 7, Site 11-MW-42, Mississippi Valley Archaeological Project."

Beyond contextual information, the physical description and classification of artifacts are also vital. CMOS advocates for clear and consistent terminology when describing items such as projectile points, ceramic types, or faunal remains. When referencing published archaeological reports or museum collections, the manual dictates specific formats for these citations, ensuring that readers can readily access the original descriptions and analyses. For example, a reference to a specific pottery type might cite the original report that defined it, including the date of publication and the author's name. This level of detail is indispensable for validating interpretations of past lifeways.

Integrating Paleoenvironmental and Scientific Data

The reconstruction of ancient environments and the application of scientific dating methods are integral to understanding United States prehistory. CMOS provides a framework for incorporating this data seamlessly into scholarly work. When referencing paleoclimatic reconstructions, for instance, researchers might cite peer-reviewed articles that present pollen analyses, ice core data, or sediment core studies. Similarly, scientific dating techniques like radiocarbon dating (^{14}C) or dendrochronology require careful citation of the laboratories that performed the analyses, the samples dated, and the published results. The manual's emphasis on precision in citation extends to these scientific measurements, ensuring that the data supporting chronological and environmental interpretations is transparent and verifiable.

For example, when discussing the impact of climate change on prehistoric human populations, a scholar might cite a study that uses lake sediment cores to reconstruct past precipitation patterns. The footnote or endnote would detail the authors, publication year, journal title, volume, and page numbers. If the research involves newly acquired scientific data, CMOS encourages researchers to describe the methodologies and cite the reports or databases where this data can be accessed. This approach reinforces the scientific basis of prehistoric research and allows for critical evaluation of the evidence used to reconstruct past human experiences in the Americas.

Citation Practices for Archaeological Evidence

Proper citation of archaeological evidence is a cornerstone of scholarly practice in United States prehistory, and the Chicago Manual of Style offers comprehensive guidance for this complex task. Unlike written documents, archaeological data is often derived from material remains, excavation

contexts, and scientific analyses, which require specific methods of attribution. The goal is to ensure that the origin of information is clear, the evidence is verifiable, and the contributions of other researchers and institutions are appropriately acknowledged. This meticulous approach underpins the credibility and reproducibility of research in the field.

The Chicago Manual of Style's flexibility allows for the adaptation of its citation system to the unique nature of archaeological sources. This means not only citing published reports and scholarly articles but also referencing museum collections, archival field notes, and databases. The emphasis remains on providing sufficient detail for a reader to locate and assess the original evidence, thereby fostering a transparent and rigorous academic dialogue about the prehistory of the United States. Scholars must therefore master the nuances of documenting artifacts, sites, and the scientific data that informs their interpretations.

Citing Published Archaeological Reports

Published archaeological reports are primary sources of information for many researchers studying United States prehistory. The Chicago Manual of Style provides clear instructions for citing these often extensive documents. Typically, a citation will include the author(s), publication year, title of the report, and publisher, along with any relevant report numbers or series information. For example:

- Smith, John A., and Maria Rodriguez. "Excavations at the Cahokia Mounds: A Comprehensive Report." Illinois State Archaeological Survey Report 23 (2018): 1-450.
- Doe, Jane. The Paleo-Indian Occupation of the High Plains. University of Colorado Press, 1999.

When referencing specific sections, chapters, or appendices within these reports, CMOS dictates that this level of detail be included in the citation. This ensures that readers can quickly find the exact information being referenced, whether it pertains to stratigraphy, artifact analysis, or dating results. The clarity and specificity of these citations are paramount for allowing other scholars to verify the data and build upon existing research in the field of US prehistory.

Referencing Museum Collections and Archives

Museum collections and archival materials are invaluable repositories of information for researchers investigating United States prehistory. The Chicago Manual of Style outlines specific methods for citing these non-published or semi-published resources. When referencing an artifact housed in a museum, the citation should include the museum's name, the collection name or accession number, and a description of the artifact. For instance:
"Terracotta effigy vessel, accession number 2017.1.3, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution."

Archival materials, such as field notes, correspondence, or photographs from

past excavations, also require careful citation. CMOS guidelines recommend including the name of the archive, the collection name, the specific item or box number, and the date if available. For example: "Field Notes, Box 12, Folder 5, Theodore J. McCown Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley." By adhering to these detailed citation practices, researchers ensure that the provenance of their information is transparent, allowing for greater academic rigor and a more complete understanding of the evidence used to reconstruct the prehistory of the United States.

Incorporating Oral Traditions and Indigenous Knowledge

The study of United States prehistory is increasingly recognizing the vital role of oral traditions and Indigenous knowledge systems in providing essential context and insights into the past. The Chicago Manual of Style, while primarily designed for text-based sources, offers principles that can be adapted to respectfully and accurately incorporate this information. This requires a sensitive approach that acknowledges the unique nature of oral history, its cultural significance, and the intellectual property rights of Indigenous communities. Proper attribution is crucial to avoid misrepresentation and to honor the sources of this invaluable knowledge.

Scholars must navigate the ethical considerations surrounding the use of oral traditions, ensuring that consent is obtained and that knowledge is shared in accordance with the wishes of the knowledge holders. CMOS's emphasis on thorough documentation and transparent sourcing is paramount here. When integrating oral traditions, researchers should strive to provide as much detail as possible regarding the individual or community from whom the knowledge was obtained, the circumstances of the sharing, and any permissions granted for its use in academic publication. This demonstrates a commitment to ethical research practices and contributes to a more holistic understanding of the prehistory of the Americas.

Ethical Considerations and Consent

When incorporating oral traditions and Indigenous knowledge into scholarship on United States prehistory, ethical considerations and obtaining informed consent are paramount. The Chicago Manual of Style, while not a guide to ethical protocols, supports the principle of transparency and proper attribution, which are fundamental to ethical engagement. Researchers must engage with Indigenous communities respectfully, understanding that their knowledge systems are living traditions, not simply data to be extracted. This involves building relationships based on trust and mutual respect, and clearly explaining the purpose and intended use of the information.

Consent should be sought from individuals or communities before recording, transcribing, or publishing their oral histories. This consent should be informed, meaning that the knowledge holders understand how their information will be used, who will have access to it, and any potential risks or benefits involved. Researchers should also be prepared to respect any restrictions or conditions placed on the use of their knowledge, such as anonymity or the requirement for community approval before publication. Adherence to these

ethical guidelines, supported by clear documentation of the consent process, aligns with the spirit of rigorous scholarship promoted by CMOS and ensures that Indigenous knowledge is treated with the dignity it deserves.

Citing Indigenous Knowledge Sources

Citing Indigenous knowledge sources according to the Chicago Manual of Style requires careful thought and adaptation. Unlike traditional academic publications, oral traditions may not have formal authors, publication dates, or stable forms. Therefore, CMOS-based citations often focus on documenting the context of the knowledge's transmission. When referencing information gained from an oral interview, a citation might include the name of the knowledge holder (if they have granted permission to be named), the community they represent, the date of the interview, and the name of the researcher who conducted it. For example: "Interview with Elder John Smoke, Lakota Nation, regarding traditional agricultural practices, conducted by Jane Doe, June 15, 2020, private collection."

In cases where Indigenous knowledge is shared through published works, such as books or articles by Indigenous authors or compilations of oral histories, standard CMOS citation formats apply. However, even here, it is crucial to understand the cultural context and the author's intent. For knowledge that is not intended for wider public dissemination or is considered sacred, researchers must respect these boundaries. The bibliography should reflect these sources as accurately as possible, often including explanatory notes about the nature of the source and the permissions granted. This ensures that the scholarly record accurately reflects the origins of the knowledge and respects the cultural protocols surrounding its sharing.

Formatting and Style Guidelines

Adherence to the formatting and style guidelines of the Chicago Manual of Style is crucial for academic papers on United States prehistory, ensuring clarity, professionalism, and consistency. These guidelines cover everything from manuscript preparation and punctuation to the proper use of headings and the presentation of tables and figures. For a field like prehistory, which relies heavily on visual and tabular data, understanding how to format these elements according to CMOS is particularly important for effective communication.

The manual provides specific instructions on how to present archaeological site maps, artifact illustrations, chronologies, and statistical data. Following these guidelines not only makes the research more accessible to readers but also demonstrates a commitment to scholarly rigor. Consistent application of CMOS throughout a paper or book contributes significantly to its overall credibility and readability, allowing the content about the deep past of the United States to be presented in the most effective manner possible.

Manuscript Preparation and Typography

The Chicago Manual of Style offers detailed recommendations for manuscript preparation, which are essential for producing polished academic work on United States prehistory. This includes guidelines on margins, spacing, font choices, and the use of capitalization. For example, CMOS generally recommends double-spacing for the main text, with specific allowances for single-spacing in block quotations. The choice of typeface is also important; sans-serif fonts are often preferred for screen readability, while serif fonts are traditionally used for print. The manual's advice on typography aims to enhance readability and create a professional presentation.

For researchers working with specialized terminology common in archaeology and anthropology, CMOS provides guidance on the appropriate use of italics and quotation marks. For instance, foreign terms or specific scientific concepts might be italicized upon their first use. The consistent application of these typographical conventions, as outlined in the Chicago Manual of Style, ensures that the manuscript is presented in a clear, uniform, and professional manner, making the complex subject matter of US prehistory more accessible to its intended audience.

Presenting Tables, Figures, and Illustrations

In the study of United States prehistory, tables, figures, and illustrations are indispensable for conveying complex data and visual evidence. The Chicago Manual of Style provides specific instructions on how to format these elements to ensure clarity and consistency. For tables, CMOS dictates guidelines for numbering, titling, and the arrangement of data, ensuring that each table is self-explanatory. Figures, which can include maps, charts, graphs, and photographs, must also be clearly labeled, numbered, and accompanied by descriptive captions that provide context and cite their sources.

When presenting archaeological illustrations, such as artifact drawings or site plans, it is important to follow CMOS recommendations for scale bars and labeling. Similarly, photographs of artifacts or excavation sites should be high quality and clearly identified. The manual also advises on the placement of these elements within the text, generally recommending that they be placed close to their first mention. By adhering to these guidelines for presenting visual and tabular data, scholars can effectively communicate their findings about the prehistory of the United States in a manner that is both informative and visually appealing.

Common Challenges and Solutions

Researchers working on United States prehistory often encounter specific challenges when applying the Chicago Manual of Style, primarily due to the nature of the evidence. The absence of written records before European contact means that source materials are inherently different from those encountered in other historical fields. Navigating the citation of artifacts, oral traditions, and scientific data requires careful attention and an understanding of how CMOS can be adapted to these unique contexts. Addressing

these challenges proactively ensures scholarly accuracy and integrity.

One common difficulty is balancing the descriptive detail required for archaeological evidence with the need for narrative flow. Another is the ethical and practical aspect of citing oral traditions and Indigenous knowledge, which demands sensitivity and clear protocols. By understanding these potential pitfalls and employing the solutions suggested by CMOS principles, scholars can produce robust and credible research on the prehistory of the United States, contributing meaningfully to the academic discourse.

Addressing Ambiguity in Chronology

One of the persistent challenges in United States prehistory is dealing with chronological ambiguity, as precise dates are often unavailable or based on broad estimations. The Chicago Manual of Style provides guidance on how to present such information clearly and cautiously. When dating sites or artifacts, researchers should always indicate the method used (e.g., radiocarbon dating, stratigraphic analysis, typology) and the margin of error. For example, a date might be presented as "ca. 800 BCE $\pm$ 50 years" or "Late Woodland period (AD 900-1200)."

CMOS also advises on how to handle differing interpretations of chronology. If there are conflicting dates or chronological frameworks proposed by different scholars, it is important to present these clearly, attributing each interpretation to its originator. This might be done through footnotes or in the main text, explaining the evidence or reasoning behind each viewpoint. By acknowledging and clearly articulating chronological uncertainties, researchers maintain academic honesty and allow readers to understand the limitations and strengths of the dating evidence in prehistoric studies of the United States.

Handling Non-Standard Source Materials

The prehistory of the United States is rich with non-standard source materials, ranging from field notes of early archaeologists to unpublished dissertations and specialized scientific analyses. The Chicago Manual of Style offers flexibility in citing these materials, prioritizing clarity and comprehensiveness. For unpublished documents, such as field notes, the manual emphasizes providing as much identifying information as possible, including the author, date, title (if any), and the repository where the material is held. For example: "Site excavation records, Willard Z. Park, 1930s, Box 15, Willard Z. Park Papers, Special Collections, University of Wyoming Libraries."

When dealing with specialized scientific data, such as raw isotopic analysis results or genetic sequencing data that have not yet been published in peer-reviewed journals, CMOS encourages researchers to describe the data and, if possible, indicate where it can be accessed, perhaps through a data repository or personal communication with the researchers. This transparent approach to handling non-standard sources is crucial for validating the evidence used in reconstructing the past and for allowing other scholars to engage with the full scope of the research materials. The manual's emphasis

on accuracy and detail serves as an indispensable guide for navigating these complex citation landscapes in the study of US prehistory.

The Importance of a Comprehensive Bibliography

A comprehensive bibliography is the bedrock of any scholarly work, and for research on United States prehistory, its importance is amplified by the diverse and often unconventional nature of the sources employed. The Chicago Manual of Style provides a meticulous framework for constructing bibliographies that are not only accurate but also provide readers with the tools to trace the origins of information and further investigate the topics discussed. In this field, where evidence can range from artifact typologies to paleoenvironmental reconstructions and oral histories, a well-organized bibliography is indispensable for scholarly credibility.

Beyond mere compliance, a thorough bibliography in prehistory scholarship acts as a roadmap for understanding the evolution of ideas, the methodologies used, and the specific pieces of evidence that underpin particular interpretations of early American societies. It is a testament to the researcher's diligence in consulting a wide array of sources and a crucial element in fostering ongoing academic dialogue. The Chicago Manual of Style's emphasis on consistent and detailed bibliographic entries ensures that this vital component of research is executed with the highest degree of precision and utility.

Structuring and Formatting Bibliographic Entries

The Chicago Manual of Style provides detailed instructions for structuring and formatting bibliographic entries, ensuring consistency and clarity across a wide range of source types relevant to United States prehistory. The core principle is to provide sufficient information for the reader to locate the source. For books, this typically includes author(s), title, place of publication, publisher, and year. For journal articles, it involves author(s), article title, journal title, volume, issue number, and page range.

When dealing with less conventional sources common in prehistory, such as archaeological excavation reports, museum catalog entries, or unpublished dissertations, CMOS offers specific guidance. For excavation reports, it might involve including report numbers or series titles. For unpublished materials, it stresses the importance of detailing the archive or repository where the item is housed. The consistent application of these rules, whether for a peer-reviewed journal article or a privately published archaeological survey, is what lends credibility and professionalism to the bibliography. This meticulous approach ensures that all contributions to the understanding of US prehistory are appropriately credited.

Ensuring Discoverability and Verification

The ultimate goal of a well-structured bibliography, as championed by the

Chicago Manual of Style, is to ensure the discoverability and verifiability of all cited sources. For researchers in United States prehistory, this means going beyond simply listing titles. It involves providing precise details that allow another scholar to find the exact report, artifact, or dataset being referenced. This is particularly critical for archaeological data, where specific excavation units, artifact provenances, and laboratory analyses are key to understanding findings.

By following CMOS guidelines for full author names, publication details, and location information for archival materials or museum collections, researchers empower their audience to critically engage with the evidence. This transparency is essential for building upon existing knowledge, challenging interpretations, and advancing the field of prehistoric studies in the United States. A discoverable and verifiable bibliography is not just a formality; it is a cornerstone of responsible and impactful scholarly communication.

FAQ

Q: How does the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) address sources that lack traditional author and publication information in US prehistory studies?

A: CMOS provides guidelines for handling unpublished manuscripts, archival materials, and personal communications, which are common in US prehistory. Researchers are encouraged to provide as much identifying information as possible, including names of individuals involved, dates, descriptions of the material, and the location of its repository. For instance, field notes from an archaeological dig would be cited with the archaeologist's name, the date of the notes, and the archive where they are held.

Q: What are the specific challenges of citing oral traditions and Indigenous knowledge within the Chicago Manual of Style for US prehistory research?

A: Citing oral traditions presents challenges because they often lack formal authors, publication dates, and fixed texts. CMOS encourages researchers to document the context of the knowledge's transmission, including the name of the knowledge holder (with permission), their community affiliation, the date of the interaction, and the researcher who conducted it. Ethical considerations, such as obtaining informed consent and respecting cultural protocols, are paramount and should be documented in the citation or an accompanying note.

Q: How should I cite archaeological artifact databases or collections according to the Chicago Manual of Style when researching US prehistory?

A: When citing artifact databases or museum collections, CMOS requires providing specific details to ensure discoverability. This typically includes the name of the institution or database, the collection name or accession

number, and a description of the artifact itself. For example, "Flint projectile point, accession number 2023.1.5, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington D.C."

Q: What is the recommended way to cite radiocarbon dating results or other scientific analyses in a paper adhering to the Chicago Manual of Style for US prehistory?

A: Radiocarbon dating results and other scientific analyses should be cited by referencing the publication where they are reported. If the results are from a recent, unpublished analysis, CMOS recommends describing the methodology and laboratory, and indicating where the data can be accessed or obtained, perhaps through personal communication or a dedicated data repository. The citation should include the sample's context and the associated date and margin of error.

Q: How does the Chicago Manual of Style advise on the presentation of archaeological site maps and plans in US prehistory scholarship?

A: CMOS provides guidelines for figures, which include maps and plans. These should be clearly numbered, titled, and accompanied by a descriptive caption that includes source information. Maps and plans should include a scale bar and any necessary legends. It is crucial that these visual aids are placed close to their first mention in the text and are legible and informative, aiding the reader's understanding of archaeological contexts.

Q: When referencing excavation reports that might be extensive or have multiple authors, what is the Chicago Manual of Style's approach to citation for US prehistory research?

A: For extensive excavation reports, CMOS recommends citing the primary author(s), publication year, the full title of the report, and the publisher. If the report is part of a series or has a specific report number, that information should also be included. For multi-authored reports, list all authors as they appear on the title page. Specific sections or chapters within the report can be cited by including chapter or section titles and page numbers.

Q: How does CMOS address the issue of presenting potentially ambiguous chronological periods in US prehistory?

A: CMOS advocates for clarity and precision when discussing chronological periods. Researchers should indicate the specific dating methods used and any associated margins of error. For periods with known ambiguity or differing scholarly interpretations, CMOS suggests presenting these variations clearly, attributing each interpretation to its source, and explaining the evidence or

reasoning behind them. This transparency helps readers understand the limitations of dating evidence.

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