

# chicago style for art history dissertations

## Mastering Chicago Style for Art History Dissertations: A Comprehensive Guide

**chicago style for art history dissertations** is a crucial element for scholarly communication, ensuring clarity, consistency, and academic rigor in presenting research. Navigating the complexities of this widely adopted citation and formatting system can be daunting, especially for graduate students undertaking the monumental task of writing a dissertation. This comprehensive guide delves into the intricacies of the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) as it applies specifically to art history research, covering everything from in-text citations and footnotes to bibliography formatting and image reproduction guidelines. Understanding these nuances is not merely about adhering to a set of rules; it's about mastering the conventions that uphold the integrity and credibility of your art historical scholarship. We will explore the most common challenges and provide detailed explanations to empower you to produce a polished, professional dissertation that meets the highest academic standards.

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### Understanding the Importance of Chicago Style in Art History

The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) is a cornerstone of scholarly publishing, and its adoption within the field of art history is near-universal. Its detailed guidelines provide a standardized framework for presenting research, ensuring that scholars can communicate their findings

effectively and credibly across different institutions and publications. For art history dissertations, adhering to CMOS is not simply a matter of preference; it is a requirement that signals a deep understanding of academic conventions and a commitment to rigorous scholarship.

The primary purpose of employing a consistent citation style like Chicago is to prevent plagiarism and to give proper attribution to the intellectual work of others. In art history, where visual evidence and interpretive arguments are paramount, meticulously documenting sources is even more critical. This allows readers to trace the lineage of ideas, verify factual claims, and understand the scholarly context from which your dissertation emerges. A well-formatted dissertation in Chicago style demonstrates a level of professionalism that enhances the perceived value and authority of your research.

## **Key Components of Chicago Style for Dissertations**

The Chicago Manual of Style offers two primary systems for citing sources: the Notes-Bibliography (NB) system and the Author-Date system. For art history dissertations, the Notes-Bibliography system is overwhelmingly preferred. This system utilizes footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations and requires a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work. Understanding the distinction and the specific application of the NB system is fundamental to navigating Chicago style for your art history thesis.

Beyond citation, Chicago style also provides extensive guidance on manuscript preparation, including formatting of the title page, table of contents, chapter beginnings, headings, and the treatment of images and captions. These elements contribute to the overall readability and professional presentation of your dissertation. Familiarity with the entire scope of CMOS, rather than just citation elements, will ensure a cohesive and polished final document.

### **The Notes-Bibliography (NB) System**

The Notes-Bibliography system is characterized by the use of numbered notes (footnotes or endnotes) within the text, which provide the full bibliographic information for each source on its first mention. Subsequent citations of the same source can then be shortened. This system is highly valued in the humanities, including art history, because it allows for extensive commentary and discussion within the notes themselves, without disrupting the flow of the main text. These notes can include tangential information, further explanations, or even brief bibliographic discussions.

The full bibliography, appearing at the end of the dissertation, is an alphabetical list of all sources cited in the text. It serves as a consolidated reference for readers who wish to explore the research further. The structure of bibliography entries closely mirrors the information presented in the notes, but with a specific format tailored for a list rather than sequential notes.

## The Author-Date System

While less common in art history dissertations, the Author-Date system also exists within CMOS. This system uses parenthetical citations in the text, typically consisting of the author's last name and the publication year (e.g., (Smith 2020, 45)). A corresponding reference list, also alphabetized by author, would then appear at the end of the document. This system is more frequently used in the social sciences and sciences, where precise dating of research is often paramount.

For art history, the NB system offers greater flexibility for incorporating detailed descriptive notes and scholarly exegesis, which are integral to art historical argumentation. Therefore, understanding the nuances of the NB system is generally a higher priority for students in this discipline.

## In-Text Citations and Notes: The Foundation of Scholarship

The effective use of footnotes or endnotes is central to Chicago style for art history dissertations. Each note corresponds to a superscript number placed within the text, typically after the punctuation of the sentence or clause it refers to. The content of these notes is what truly distinguishes the NB system and allows for rich scholarly discourse.

The first time a source is cited, the note must include complete bibliographic information. Subsequent citations of the same source can be significantly shortened. This dual approach ensures both thoroughness and conciseness, making your dissertation accessible while maintaining academic integrity. Understanding the correct formatting for different types of sources—books, journal articles, exhibition catalogs, websites, and even archival materials—is crucial.

## First Footnote/Endnote Citation

When citing a source for the first time in your dissertation, the corresponding footnote or endnote should provide all necessary bibliographic details so that the reader can locate it. For a book, this typically includes the author's full name, the title of the book in italics, the place of publication, the publisher, the year of publication, and the specific page number(s) being referenced. For instance:

- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 15.

For a journal article, the format would include the author's name, the article title in quotation marks, the journal title in italics, the volume and issue numbers, the publication date, and the page numbers. For example:

- Linda Nochlin, "The Body in Pieces: Austin Osman Spare and the Fragmented Body," *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 2 (June 2000): 345.

## Subsequent Footnote/Endnote Citations

Once a source has been fully cited, subsequent references to it can be significantly abbreviated. This "short form" typically includes the author's last name, a shortened version of the title (if necessary to distinguish it from other works by the same author), and the specific page number. If only one work by an author is cited, the title can sometimes be omitted, though including it is often clearer. For example:

- Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 32.
- Nochlin, "The Body in Pieces," 350.

A common practice in art history is the use of "ibid." (short for ibidem, meaning "in the same place") when citing the immediately preceding source. However, this should be used judiciously to avoid confusion. If the page number differs, it should be indicated, for example: "Ibid., 35."

## Bibliography Formatting

The bibliography is a cumulative list of all sources cited in your dissertation, arranged alphabetically by the author's last name. The formatting for bibliography entries is very similar to the first footnote/endnote citation, but with key differences: the author's last name appears first, followed by a comma and then the first name. Titles of books and journals are italicized, and titles of articles are placed in quotation marks. Unlike notes, bibliographies do not typically include specific page numbers for the entire work unless it's a specific chapter or section being cited as a whole. For example:

- Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books, 1972.
- Nochlin, Linda. "The Body in Pieces: Austin Osman Spare and the Fragmented Body." *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 2 (June 2000): 345-368.

## Bibliography: A Comprehensive Record of Sources

The bibliography section of your art history dissertation serves as an indispensable resource for your readers. It is more than just a list; it is a carefully curated record of the scholarly conversations you have engaged with and the evidence you have drawn upon to construct your arguments. In the context of Chicago style, the bibliography is an alphabetical compilation of all the works cited within your footnotes or endnotes, presented in a standardized and easily navigable format.

A well-constructed bibliography not only demonstrates the breadth and depth of your research but also allows scholars to easily locate and consult the primary and secondary sources that have informed your work. This transparency is a hallmark of rigorous academic inquiry, and its accurate

presentation is a direct reflection of your attention to detail and adherence to scholarly conventions.

## Structuring the Bibliography

The primary organizing principle of the Chicago style bibliography is alphabetical order, based on the author's last name. If multiple works by the same author are included, they are listed chronologically by publication date, from earliest to latest. In cases where an author has more than one publication in the same year, subsequent entries are often distinguished with a letter appended to the year (e.g., 2020a, 2020b).

The formatting of each entry within the bibliography is crucial. It must be consistent with the guidelines for your specific source type (book, article, website, etc.) and meticulously follow the CMOS rules. The goal is to provide enough information for anyone to find the source without ambiguity. For example, exhibition catalogs, which are common in art history, require specific formatting that includes the exhibition title, location, dates, and organizing institution, alongside any listed authors or essayists.

## Citing Different Source Types in the Bibliography

The Chicago Manual of Style provides detailed instructions for citing a wide array of source materials. For art history dissertations, common source types and their general bibliographic format include:

- **Books:** Author's Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.
- **Journal Articles:** Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal* Volume, no. Issue (Year): Page Range.
- **Exhibition Catalogs:** Editor(s) or Author(s). *Title of Exhibition Catalog*. City: Institution, Year.
- **Book Chapters:** Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Chapter." In *Title of Book*, edited by Editor's First Name Last Name, Page Range. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year.
- **Websites:** Author's Last Name, First Name (if available). "Title of Page." Name of Website. Date of Publication or Last Update (if available). Accessed Date. URL.

It is essential to consult the latest edition of the Chicago Manual of Style for the most up-to-date and precise formatting guidelines for each specific source type, as these can evolve.

## Formatting Your Dissertation: Beyond Citations

While citations and bibliographies are paramount, the overall formatting of your art history dissertation in Chicago style extends to numerous other aspects of the manuscript. Adherence to these guidelines ensures a professional, coherent, and easily navigable document for your dissertation committee and future readers. These elements contribute significantly to the presentation of your research and the perceived professionalism of your scholarship.

From the arrangement of preliminary pages to the treatment of headings and the inclusion of visual materials, every detail matters. A meticulously formatted dissertation signals a high level of care and attention to detail, which can positively influence how your work is received.

## **Preliminary Pages and Front Matter**

The initial sections of your dissertation, often referred to as the front matter, follow a specific order and formatting convention. This typically includes:

- **Title Page:** Contains the dissertation title, your name, the degree sought, department, university, and date of submission.
- **Abstract:** A concise summary of your dissertation's main arguments, methodology, and findings (usually 150-300 words).
- **Table of Contents:** Lists all major sections, chapters, and subheadings with corresponding page numbers.
- **List of Figures (if applicable):** A separate listing of all images, illustrations, and tables with their captions and page numbers.
- **Acknowledgments (optional):** A section to thank individuals and institutions who have contributed to your research.

Each of these sections has specific formatting requirements, such as font usage, spacing, and numbering conventions, that should be strictly followed according to the university's guidelines and the CMOS.

## **Chapter and Section Formatting**

The Chicago Manual of Style provides guidance on the consistent formatting of chapter titles, section headings, and subheadings. This creates a visual hierarchy that helps readers follow the structure of your argument. Typically, chapter titles are centered and prominent, while subheadings are used to break down complex ideas within chapters.

Paragraphs should be indented (usually five spaces or 0.5 inches) for the first line, with the exception of the first paragraph following a heading, which is often not indented. Double-spacing is the standard for the body of the text, though single-spacing might be used for block quotations or extensive notes.

## Page Numbering

Page numbering in a dissertation typically begins with Arabic numerals starting from the first page of the main body of the text (usually Chapter 1). The preliminary pages (title page, abstract, table of contents, etc.) are usually numbered using Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc.), but the page numbers themselves are often not printed on these pages, with the exception of the title page, which is typically counted as page i but not shown. Always check your university's specific requirements for page numbering.

## Special Considerations for Art History Dissertations

Art history dissertations present unique challenges and requirements due to their reliance on visual evidence and specific terminology. Chicago style offers guidance on how to effectively integrate and cite images, as well as how to handle specialized vocabulary and terminology common in the field.

The accurate and ethical use of images is as critical as the citation of textual sources. Proper attribution and adherence to copyright are essential components of scholarly practice in art history. Similarly, the consistent and precise use of art historical terms ensures clarity and avoids misinterpretation among your audience.

## Image Captioning and Citation

Each image included in your art history dissertation must be accompanied by a caption that provides essential information. According to Chicago style, captions should typically include:

- Figure number (e.g., Fig. 1)
- Artist's name, nationality, dates (if known)
- Title of artwork (italicized), date of creation, medium, dimensions, and current location.
- Source of the image, including photographer (if applicable) and original source.

For example:

Fig. 1. Leonardo da Vinci (Italian, 1452–1519). *Mona Lisa*. c. 1503–1506. Oil on poplar panel; 77 × 53 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Photograph by Erich Lessing/Art Resource, New York.

In addition to the caption, the source of the image should also be cited in a footnote or endnote, providing further details about where the image was found or obtained, especially if it is from a specific publication or online archive. This ensures that the origin of all visual material is fully documented.

## Handling Terminology and Foreign Languages

Art history frequently involves the use of specialized terminology and foreign language terms. CMOS provides guidelines for the italicization of foreign words and phrases that have not been fully Anglicized. When a foreign term is used repeatedly and is central to your argument, it is often recommended to define it upon its first use, either in the text or in a footnote.

For example, when discussing Italian Renaissance art, terms like *sfumato* or *chiaroscuro* might be used. The first instance might be accompanied by a brief explanation in a footnote: " *Sfumato* (Italian for 'smoked') refers to the subtle blurring of outlines and colors." Subsequent uses can then proceed without re-explanation.

## Archival Research and Primary Sources

Dissertations in art history often involve extensive archival research. Chicago style offers specific guidelines for citing primary source materials found in archives, such as letters, manuscripts, and unpublished documents. These citations should clearly indicate the collection name, the specific document or item, the repository, and any relevant finding aids or box and folder numbers.

The goal is to provide a precise location for the material so that another researcher can access it. For example, a citation might look like: "Letter from Isabella Stewart Gardner to Bernard Berenson, May 10, 1905, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Archives, Boston, Box 3, Folder 7."

## Common Pitfalls to Avoid in Chicago Style

Navigating the intricacies of Chicago style can lead to common errors, especially for those new to its application. Being aware of these pitfalls can help you avoid them and ensure a polished, professional dissertation. Vigilance and careful proofreading are key to producing a document that meets academic standards.

Many of these errors stem from a lack of consistent application of rules or a misunderstanding of specific nuances within the Chicago Manual of Style. Focusing on these frequently overlooked areas can significantly improve the quality of your manuscript.

## Inconsistent Application of Notes and Bibliography

A frequent issue is the inconsistent application of the rules for notes and bibliographies. This can manifest as variations in punctuation, capitalization, or the inclusion of specific bibliographic details across different citations. Ensuring that every note and bibliography entry adheres strictly to CMOS is paramount.



Another common error is the failure to correctly identify and format subsequent citations. If a source is cited multiple times, the short-form citation must be applied consistently after the first full citation. Misusing "ibid." or creating an incomplete bibliography are also common mistakes that can detract from the credibility of your work.

## **Incorrect Handling of Punctuation and Capitalization**

Punctuation and capitalization are areas where minor deviations can have a significant impact on the correctness of a citation. For instance, the placement of periods, commas, and quotation marks within notes and bibliography entries must be precise. The capitalization of titles, both of books and articles, also follows specific rules that must be observed.

Particular attention should be paid to the use of italics for book titles and journal titles, and quotation marks for article titles and chapter titles. Incorrectly formatted titles can lead to confusion and appear unprofessional. Ensuring that these elements are consistently correct across your entire document is crucial.

## **Ignoring Specific Source Type Requirements**

The Chicago Manual of Style provides distinct formatting guidelines for various types of sources. A common pitfall is treating all sources the same, failing to recognize the specific requirements for citing a journal article versus a website, or a museum object versus an archival document. Each type demands a tailored approach to ensure all necessary information is presented clearly and accurately.

For example, citing online sources requires careful attention to access dates and URLs, while citing artwork requires specific details about the medium, dimensions, and collection. Overlooking these specific requirements can lead to incomplete or inaccurate citations, undermining the thoroughness of your research.

Mastering Chicago style for your art history dissertation is an investment in the clarity, credibility, and lasting impact of your scholarly contribution. By diligently applying these guidelines, you not only meet the expectations of academic institutions but also contribute to the robust and transparent discourse that defines art historical research. The commitment to accurate citation and meticulous formatting is a testament to the rigor and dedication you bring to your field.

## **FAQ**

### **Q: What is the primary citation system used for art history dissertations in Chicago style?**

A: The Notes-Bibliography (NB) system is the primary and most widely accepted citation system for art history dissertations when following the Chicago Manual of Style. This system utilizes footnotes or endnotes for in-text citations and a comprehensive bibliography at the end of the work.

## **Q: How do I format an image caption in Chicago style for my art history dissertation?**

A: A Chicago-style image caption for an art history dissertation typically includes the figure number, artist's name and dates, artwork title (italicized), date of creation, medium, dimensions, and current location. It also requires the source of the image, including the photographer if applicable.

## **Q: What is the difference between a footnote and an endnote in Chicago style?**

A: Footnotes appear at the bottom of the page on which the citation is made, while endnotes are collected at the end of a chapter or the entire document. Both serve the same purpose of providing in-text citation information, but their placement differs. Art history dissertations often favor footnotes for their immediate accessibility.

## **Q: Can I use abbreviations like "ibid." in my Chicago style art history dissertation?**

A: Yes, the abbreviation "ibid." (meaning "in the same place") can be used in Chicago style notes to refer to the immediately preceding source. However, it should be used sparingly and with caution to avoid confusion, especially if the page number changes.

## **Q: How should I cite an exhibition catalog in my art history dissertation using Chicago style?**

A: Citing an exhibition catalog in Chicago style requires including the exhibition title (italicized), the city of publication, the organizing institution, and the year. If there are editors or essayists, their names should also be included in the citation according to CMOS guidelines.

## **Q: What are the key differences in formatting between a footnote and a bibliography entry in Chicago style?**

A: In footnotes, the author's first name comes before their last name, and the citation is followed by a period. In bibliographies, the author's last name comes first, followed by a comma and then the first name, and the entry is typically formatted with a hanging indent.

## **Q: Do I need to cite every image I use in my art history dissertation?**

A: Yes, every image used in an art history dissertation must be properly cited in the caption and potentially in a footnote or endnote, including the source, copyright information, and usage permissions where applicable, to avoid plagiarism and respect intellectual property.

## **Q: What if I am citing a source that has no author listed?**

A: If a source has no listed author, the citation in Chicago style begins with the title of the work. This applies to both footnote/endnote citations and bibliography entries, where the title then serves as the basis for alphabetical ordering.

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