

## Protocols for the citation of online and digitally published materials

Most academic institutions still prefer material editions as sources, and where material editions exist and are reasonably available citations and other references should be made to them in the appropriate way (MHRA, MLA, Chicago etc.). Increasingly, however, academic writers at all levels find themselves wishing to cite or otherwise refer to materials that are only or proximately available in digital form, typically on-line or through a purchased or accessed e-book in one of many possible formats.

There is as yet no fully agreed set of protocols for such citations and other references. Those promulgated below have been developed by the series editors at [Humanities Ebooks LLP](http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk/) to help bridge the gap. It is suggested that in assessed work this document be cited in a preliminary statement (as, 'All references to online and digitally published sources conform to the Humanities-Ebooks Protocols. The protocols are available as a free pdf from the HEB home page: [http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk/.](http://www.humanities-ebooks.co.uk/))

### 1. For material published only on a website

The foot- or endnote should provide as a minimum the complete Uniform Resource Locator (URL), including the preliminary 'http://', *and* the date accessed. This is an adequate reference for website-pages, even if long and undivided, as the exact location on the page of any given quotation can be electronically searched, *but URL + date is not automatically sufficient*. If, for example, the page cited is (part of) a titled and/or signed article, whether in an on-line periodical or freely posted, author and/or title should be supplied in the note before the URL and date accessed.

Copying and pasting the URL from the bar in your browser is strongly recommended to avoid errors of transcription. In digital documents all such cited URLs should be formatted as live links. Where the length of an URL causes formatting problems, it *may not* be curtailed or edited (which may invalidate the link), but may be given its own line, or the point-size dropped as necessary (which doesn't).

#### Examples

Joe Bloggs, 'The Shield of Order', at:

<http://www.brigadoon.ac.uk/arts/english/prizeessays.html>; 14 Jan. 2008.

Jane N. M. I. Doe, ‘In Defence of Anonymity’, at:

<http://www.brigadoon.ac.uk/arts/archandanth/GeraldWhoheLectures/1999/InDefenceofAnonymity.html>;  
26 May 2008.

## 2. For material published as a posted and/or downloadable PDF file

A normal citation as for materially published work, including author, title, and page-number(s), should be given, + the URL where the document may be viewed or downloaded, + the date of your access or download. The ordinary citation is sufficient because the pagination of .pdf files is locked; the date is needed because such files may (like websites and Wikipedia entries) be revised by their authors or posters.

### Example

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Biographical Sketch*, p. 3, (personal website, last revised April 2008) at: <http://www.ursulaklequin.com/BiographicalSketch.pdf>. 7 Aug. 2008

## 3. For material published as a downloadable flowing file

(e.g. Mobipocket/.prc/ .mobi files, Sony Reader/.lrf files, Kindle/.azw files etc.)

For reflowable files there is intrinsic difficulty, and electronic search may be needed to find a quotation. Some consistency, however, can be obtained if **four** values are set— (i) **fount in a specific size**, (ii) **spacing**, (iii) **margins**, and (iv) **view**—so it is necessary (in addition to author, title, place of publication, publisher, and date published) to specify these values and the file-type. We suggest as a default configuration:

fount: Arial 20-point

line-spacing: the minimum value (1, single, tight)

margins: the minimum value (0, none)

view: single-page with maximum values (full screen, full width)

These values keep total pagination at or close to minimum possible length. Given the variations that remain (depending on hardware and OS used) it is **required** that wherever possible a chapter or sub-/section be parenthetically specified. If, on a given machine and format, with this configuration set, *one* page-number still covers *two* pages/columns, lower-case ‘a’ should be added to indicate the left-hand page/column, lower-case ‘b’ for the right.

### Example (if the HEB Protocol has been specified)

Jim Butcher, *Small Favor* (New York: Roc, 2008, as a Mobipocket file), p. 315 (ch. 46).

If any other configuration is used it *must* be specified in full with the file-type.

#### 4. A comment on dating

*The Chicago Manual of Style* (15th ed.), considering citations of material posted on-line, generally disparages the provision of dates of access (and page revision), on the grounds that earlier posted versions of a page are rarely available to readers (§17.12)—though certain exceptions are later made (§§17.187, 17.237). We disagree with their general assessment partly because the date of a document's availability in a specified form is itself germane to all assessment in reading, and because earlier posted versions are increasingly available, most notably for Wikipedia articles through the 'page history' tab. Additionally, while protocols are uncertain, the general rule that **fuller is better** should apply.

For dates the standard international format '23 March 2003', '17 Nov. 2007' etc. is recommended because the separation of the two groups of numerals by the abbreviated verbal form of the month reduces the chances of error or confusion (particularly in on-screen reading).

When entering dates of access do **not** use autotext or any other feature that automatically supplies that day's date, because these tagged dates typically change to the current date whenever a file is opened.

#### 5. A Note on Citations Using Google-Books

If a source is quoted from its digitised Google-Books copy a standard reference is required—author, title, place of publication, publisher, date, and page-reference/s—with the **shortest exact** Google URL appended. This will **not** be the search-string whereby a book was found, but the URL that appears when the 'About this Book' tab is clicked, which will be of the form:

<http://book.google.com/books?id=XYZXYZYXZYXZ>