MLA Documentation Tip Sheet

This handout gives a brief overview of basic MLA style rules. For an exhaustive list of guidelines, please see the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* by Joseph Gibaldi in the ALPHA Center.

SOURCES

There are two kinds of sources:

- ❖ Primary: study or data on a subject written by someone with firsthand observation
- Secondary: study or data on a subject written by someone who has analyzed firsthand data written by someone else

WHAT TO DOCUMENT

- ✓ All information that is new knowledge to you
- ✓ All paraphrased information
- ✓ Direct quotations

Documenting too much is generally better than not documenting enough. In general, you should probably document at least once per paragraph.

IN-TEXT DOCUMENTATION

- The information in an MLA in-text citation "enable[s] readers to find the source in the works-cited list" (Gibaldi 142-3).
- Documentation is stated in parentheses following the information being documented.
- ❖ The period (or ending punctuation) of a sentence follows the documentation in parentheses (except for in block quotations, see below). For example: The giving over of self-will cannot take place without pain (Lewis 92).
- ❖ When referring to a person in the text, use the first and last name on the first reference; on subsequent references, use the last name only. Do not include titles, such as Dr., Ph.D., M.D., Mr., and Ms.
- Quotation marks go before the documentation in parentheses. <u>For example</u>: "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3.16).
- ❖ When altering a direct quotation, use brackets. When altering a direct quotation by removing words or phrases, use an ellipses to mark the gap. Some professors might want you to put an inserted ellipses in brackets; no matter their preferences, you must distinguish between an ellipses which was already present in a quote and an ellipses which you inserted by using brackets.
 - <u>For example</u>: In her study of the Middle Ages, Tuchman writes, "Medical thinking, trapped in the theory of astral influences, stressed air as the communicator of disease…" (101-2).

- In her study of the Middle Ages, Tuchman writes, "Medical thinking [...] stressed air as the communicator of disease..." (101-2)
- ❖ Quotations which are more than four lines are set off as block quotations.
 - 1. Start a new line at the beginning of the quotation.
 - 2. Indent the left margin one inch.
 - 3. Double space the quotation.
 - 4. Do not use quotation marks.
 - 5. Place the parenthetical reference after the final punctuation mark.
 - 6. Begin a new line immediately after the quotation.

For example:

Albert reported the following:

Whenever these pathogenic organisms attack the human body and begin to multiply, the infection is set in motion. The host responds to this parasitic invasion with efforts to cleanse itself of the invading agents.

When rejection efforts of the host become visible (fever, sneezing, congestion), the disease status exists. (314-315)

SAMPLE IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Author's name not given in the text

The giving over of self-will cannot take place without pain (Lewis 92).

Author's name cited in the text

Lewis says that while the pain of humans may be explained, the pain of animals cannot be explained (129).

More than one work by the same author

Many first-time philosophy students question the necessity or believability of philosophy (Edman, <u>Quest</u> 9). But teachers of the practice contend that philosophy is an "integral part of life" and, therefore, learning (Edman, <u>Dewey</u> 205-6).

A source with two or three authors

Christians have allowed a chasm to grow between faith and day-to-day jobs and careers (Sherman and Hendricks 15).

A source with more than three authors

"The purpose of the introduction is to explain to the reader what issues were investigated and why they were worth investigating" (Hayes et al. 203).

Religious texts

"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry" (<u>NIV</u> James 1.19). (Longer book names should be abbreviated, as in Rev., and there is no need to underline or italicize the names of the books of the Bible--e.g., Acts not <u>Acts</u>.)

A source that quotes another source

When possible, find the primary source and quote it directly. When this is not possible, use the secondary source as follows:

Huber says, "ENG2209 is the epitome of academic joy" (qtd. in Stavens 47).

WORKS CITED PAGE

- ❖ At the end of the paper, you must provide a list of works which you quoted in your paper. Put them in alphabetical order by the first word in each entry.
- ❖ The words *Works Cited* should be centered at the top of a new page, not underlined, italicized, or bolded and in 12-point font.
- ❖ Double space the entire Works Cited page: within all entries, between all entries, and after the words *Works Cited*.
- ❖ The pages should be numbered continuously from the paper itself. For example, if the paper ends on page 8, the Works Cited page should begin on page 9.
- ❖ Use a hanging indent for all entries: the first line of an entry is flush left, and all other lines in the entry are indented one half inch.

SAMPLE ENTRIES FOR WORKS CITED

Book with one author

Lewis, C.S. The Problem of Pain. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

Book with two or three authors

Eggins, Susanne, and Diane Slade. Analyzing Casual Conversation. London: Cassel, 1997.

Book with more than three authors

Gilman, Sander, et al. Hysteria Beyond Freud. Berkley: U of California P, 1993.

Corporate author

American Medical Association. The American Medical Association Encyclopedia of Medicine.

Ed. Charles B. Clayman. New York: Random, 1989.

Article in a scholarly journal

Fitzgerald, John. "The Misconceived Revolution: State and Society in China's Nationalist

Revolution, 1923-26." Journal of Asian Studies 49 (1990): 323-43.

Article in a magazine (e.g. <u>Time</u>)

Murphy, Cullen. "Women and the Bible." Atlantic Monthly Aug. 1993: 39-64.

CITING ELECTRONIC SOURCES

- ❖ With electronic sources, some of the data which should be included on the Works Cited page is frequently missing. As a general rule, include as much data as you can find on your source, but do not be alarmed if you cannot find everything.
- ❖ Because of the fluctuation within electronic media, it is important to carefully determine the credibility of electronic sources. Most articles that appear in journals or books have been reviewed and juried by several experts, enhancing their **credibility**. This is not always the case with electronic sources. Web sites ending in .edu (educational institution), .gov (government agency), and .org (non-profit organization) are more consistently credible than Web sites ending in .com or .net.
- For more information on citing databases in MLA, see the worksheet entitled "Citing Aggregator Databases in MLA."

SAMPLE ENTRIES FOR ELECTRONIC SOURCES

Document from an Internet site

Author's name. "Title of the document." Information about print publication. Name of Web site

or database. Date accessed <Web site URL>.

"Fresco Painting." <u>Encyclopedia Britannica Online</u>. 2002. Encyclopedia Britannica. 8 May 2002 http://search.eb.com/>.

Stowe, Harriet Beecher. "Sojourner Truth, the Libyan Sibyl." <u>Atlantic Monthly</u> Apr. 1863: 473-81. Electronic Text Center. Ed. David Seaman. 2002. Alderman Lib., U of Virginia. 19

June 2002 http://etext.lib.virginis.edu/toc/modneg/public/StoSojo.html>.

Entire Web site

<u>Title of site.</u> Name of site's editor. Date of electronic publication. Name of any sponsoring institution or organization. Date of Access <URL>.

<u>Bartleby.com: Great Books Online</u>. Ed. Steven van Leeuwen. 2002. 5 May 2002 http://www.bartley.com>.

Article in Online periodical

Author's name. Title of material. <u>Name of periodical</u> Volume number. Issue number (Date of publication). Date of access <URL>.

Chan, Evans. "Postmodern and Hong Kong Cinema." <u>Postmodern Culture</u> 10.3 (2000). <u>Project Muse</u>. 20 May 2002 http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/pmc/v010/10.3chan.html.

CD-ROM and portable databases

Author's name. Publication information for print source. <u>Title of database</u>. Publication medium.

Name of vendor. Electronic publication date.

Dover, Eileen. "Over the cliff." New York Times 29 Feb. 2001: A3. New York Times Ondisc.

CD-ROM. SilverPlatter. July 2001.

Sample MLA Works Cited Page:

Works Cited

- Besthoff, Len. "Cell Phone Use Increases Risk of Accidents, but Users Willing to Take the Risk." WRAL Online. 11 Nov. 1999. 12 Jan. 2001 http://www.wral-tv.com/news/wral/1999/1110-talking-driving/>.
- Farmers Insurance Group. "New Survey Shows Drivers Have Had 'Close Calls' with Cell

 Phone Users." Farmers Insurance Group. 8 May 2000. 12 Jan. 2001

 http://www.farmersinsurance.com/news_cellphones.html>.
- Haughney, Christine. "Taking Phones out of the Drivers' Hands." Washington Post 5 Nov. 2000: A8.
- Ippolito, Milo. "Driver's Sentence Not Justice, Mom Says." <u>Atlanta Journal-Constitution</u> 25 Sept. 1000: J1.
- Layton, Lyndsey. "Legislators Aiming to Disconnect Motorists." Washington Post 10 Dec. 2000: A21.
- Pena, Patricia N. "Patti Pena's Letter to Car Talk." <u>Cars.com</u>. Car Talk. 10 Jan. 2001 http://cartalk.cars.com/About/Morgan-Pena/letter.html.
- Redelmeier, Donald A., and Robert J. Tibshirani. "Association Between Cellular-Telephone Calls and Motor Vehicle Collisions." New England Journal of Medicine 336 (1997): 453-58.
- Sundeen, Matt. "Cell Phones and Highway Safety: 2000 State Legislative Update." National

 Conference of State Legislatures. Dec. 2000. 27 Feb 2001

 http://ncsl.org/programs/esnr/cellphone.pdf>.
- Violanti, John M. "Cellular Phones and Fatal Traffic Collisions." <u>Accident Analysis and Prevention</u> 30 (1998): 519-24.