WRITING FOR THE WEB

INTRODUCTION

Arguably the most important audience to write for in today's communications environment, web users make up a large part of information supply and demand. There are over 3.5 billion Google queries conducted each day by people all over the world ("Google Search Statistics"). For this reason, it is important to know how to write documents to be viewed on digital platforms such as blogs and web pages.

In this resource, we will go over a few key methods used in web document creation. While the internet is comparable to the Wild West in its expansive, lawless nature, following certain standards can make your web document more effective. The standards we will cover include:

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) – making documents more prominent in search engine queries
- Inverted Pyramid Style - a writing method for informative articles
- Design Techniques - how to best format your document for digital display
- Good Navigation - how to arrange links and text for effective user interaction
- Content Management Systems - tools for optimizing documents for computer interfaces
- Documentation Style – giving credit to sources and references

Writing for the web can be daunting due to the diversity of document users and the dynamic nature of digital platforms. This overview will provide a strong basis on which you can base your content development.

DOCUMENTATION STYLE

Documentation can be a tedious part of the research process. It is necessary to give credit to other writers, who worked hard to gather and analyze information for use. It also serves to validate the ideas you express within your document. Users want to know the source of the information they are given to make sure it is credible. Sometimes they may even use these references to seek out more in depth coverage of the topic covered in a document.

Academics, lawyers, business professionals, and government officials all develop documents, and all of them require some level of content citation. Because of this, several documentation standards exist. These include the Modern Language Association (MLA) format, American Psychological Association (APA) format, Chicago Manual Style (CMS), Credit Support Annex (CSA) style, and American Chemical Society (ACS) style, all of which are covered in this chapter. As college students, you will most often be required to use MLA, but the other styles may prove more appropriate for other documents you may be called upon to develop. Being aware of the basic rules for following these documentation styles will help you gather and effectively present the correct amount of source information to support your writing.

AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY

ACS style was standardized by the American Chemical Society to be used in chemistry research documents. It appears similar to MLA format, with a few key differences in reference list format. Its main flexibility occurs in the various options available for in-text citations. Another difference in this style over others is that it deals exclusively with documentation standards, without addressing page layout or spacing. A writer who is familiar with MLA and has access to a reference guide should not have any trouble following ACS format in their documents.

In-Text Citations

There are three key ways in which to reference your sources within text when following ACS standards, and these are through italic numbers, superscript numbers, and by the author name followed by a comma and the year of publication. Italic or superscript numbers may go either within or at the end of a sentence containing the referenced information; author name and publication year can only be placed at the end of the sentence, similarly to MLA format ("ACS Style Guide"). Which of these you choose depends entirely upon personal preference, or functionality based upon the nature of the documents you are citing. For example, it would not make sense to use the author name and publication year if one or both are unknown, as would be the case with most web pages. The following examples will demonstrate all of the above methods using a fictional scenario.

Italic numbers:

Jensen (*1*) showed that over 76% of electromagnetized fabulonium molecules synthesized into wonderproteins when exposed to a direct current.

In the study, over 76% of the electromagnetized fabulonium molecules synthesized into wonderproteins when exposed to a direct current (*1*).

Superscript numbers:

Jensen[1] showed that over 76% of electromagnetized fabulonium molecules synthesized into wonderproteins when exposed to a direct current.

In the study, over 76% of the electromagnetized fabulonium molecules synthesized into wonderproteins when exposed to a direct current.[1]

Name and publication year example:

Jensen showed that over 76% of electromagnetized fabulonium molecules synthesized into wonderproteins when exposed to a direct current (2014).

In the study, over 76% of the electromagnetized fabulonium molecules synthesized into wonderproteins when exposed to a direct current (Jensen, 2014).

Note that in the case of superscript in-text citations, the number goes after the period of the sentence instead of before, as is the case for both italic numbers and author name citations. Another situation to be aware of is the case of referencing more than one author. If it is only two, use both last names separated by "and"; if a document has more than two authors, use the last name of the first author followed by the Latin "et al." ("ACS Style Guide").

If you are using numerical in-text citation and have more than one source that you must cite, separate the source numbers by a comma if the references are nonconsecutive in the reference list, or an en dash if references are consecutive. With multiple citations when using the author name and publication year format, separate the references within the parentheses by a semicolon (Dodd, Solla, and Berard).

Multiple sources:

...the statements correspond.[1-3]; ...the statements correspond.[1,3]

...which proves its existence (*1-3*); ...which proves its existence (*1, 3)*.

...determining initiation sequences (Jensen, 2014; Helsing et al., 1997).

ACS offers several solutions regarding in-text citations. As long as you choose one style and maintain it throughout the entirety of your document, the text format will be within ACS standards.

Books and Journals

ACS style referencing is similar to MLA format, but vastly more complex. If a reference goes into a second line on a page, the second line is indented ("ACS Style"). Author names are formatted by last name, followed by a comma and their first and middle initials. Unlike MLA, book titles are not italicized unless the particular chapter being referenced was written by an author differing from the entirety of the publication. Books and articles both require publication information, and it is preferable that article publication information be followed by the particular pages it was found on. Book references have normal font for their publication years, while articles references contain the year in bold ("Learn, Write, and Cite - ACS Style Guide"). These are the two common print documents that you will be citing for an ACS research document, and these are only a few of the differences.

Another element of ACS referencing is the set of agreed upon abbreviations for journal titles. The *Chemical Abstracts Service Source Index* (CASSI) contains these abbreviations, which will be followed by a period when used. One word journal titles are not abbreviated. If the journal name is in another language, it can be cited by the English translation of its name; if the article comes from a translated journal, reference both the English translation of the article as well as the original and separate the two references by a semicolon (Dodd, Solla, and Berard).
Here are examples from our fictional scenario to clarify:

Book:

Jensen, H.K. Looking for Chemicals' Personalities: A Study in the Radiation of Extraterrestrial Elements; Science League Publications: Austin, Tx., 2014.

Chapter in a book with multiple authors:

Jensen, H.K.; Bosch, A.P. Looking for Chemicals' Personalities. In *Science Revelations for the Millennial Attention Span*; Science League Publications: Austin, Tx., 2014; pp 15-65.

Journal:

Jensen, H.K. Looking for Chemicals' Personalities. *Am. Chem. Rev*. **2014**. *1*. 15-65.

Journals and books have countless variations you may come across that can complicate the referencing process. While you can logically infer how to properly format them, it is always best to consult the ACS Style Guide for a definite standard.

Websites

It is often difficult to gather source information from websites; however, ACS only requires the title of the site, its URL, and the date that it was used. If more information can be gathered, it is intuitively placed in the same format as it would be a journal or book reference.

Website:

Jensen, H.K. A Study in the Radiation of Extraterrestrial Elements. http: //scienceleague.com/fabulonium. (accessed Nov 5, 2014).

If you are citing the home page of a site, the title of the site would be the name of the domain followed by "Home Page".

Material Safety Data Sheets

One form of document found more often in chemistry research than other fields is an MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet), which contains basic information on how to handle particular substances in a work or scientific environment with the least potential for hazard ("The MSDS Faq: Index"). According to ACS, what you need to include when referencing an MSDS are the substance, the number of the MSDS, and then include the company who produced it just as you would a publisher, with the name, location, and date. If the MSDS was used from a website source, put "[Online]" after the MSDS number, and then place the URL and date accessed after the company information ("Learn, Write, and Cite - ACS Style Guide").

MSDS:

Fabulonium; MSDS No. H3054 [Online]; Science Construction: Pleasantville, NC, Jan 5, 1987. http: //scienceconstruction.com/documentsforemployees/msds/h3054.htm (accessed Dec 24, 2014).

An MSDS is a great source to use for scientific research, and therefore may be a common reference within ACS formatted documents.

Live Events

A lecture can be a great resource for writing scientific documents, and so knowing how to reference one following ACS is crucial. The basic format is name of speaker, the title of the lecture, the name of the event that hosted the lecture, the location of the event, and the date it was delivered ("ACS Style").

Live event:

Jensen, H.K. Looking for Chemicals' Personalities:A Study in the Radiation of Extraterrestrial Elements. Presented at the Science League Publications National Conference, New York, NY, 2014.

As you may observe, there are equivalencies in ACS formatting that can help you determine how to format your reference. In this case, the speaker is the author of the lecture, and the lecture can be thought of as an article delivered orally. Understanding these general concepts make implementing ACS style in your documents far less daunting.

References

"ACS Style." *Cite Source*. Trinity College Library: Hartford, CT, n.d. Web. 16 July 2014.

"ACS Style Guide." *ACS: American Chemical Society*. Williams College Libraries, 8 Feb. 2013. Web. 15 July 2014.

Dodd, Janet S., Leah Solla, and Paula M. Berard. "References." *The ACS Style Guide*. By Anne M. Coghill and Lorrin R. Garson. Washington, DC: American Chemical Society, 2006. 287-341. n.d. Web. 16 July 2014.

"Google Search Statistics." - *Internet Live Stats*. Real Time Statistics Project, n.d. Web. 15 July 2014.

"Learn, Write, and Cite - ACS Style Guide." *Chemistry Library*. University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d. Web. 15 July 2014.

"The MSDS FAQ: Index." *The MSDS FAQ: Index*. ILPI, 25 Apr. 2012. Web. 16 July 2014.