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AVOIDING PLAGIARISM BY USING MLA STYLE GUIDE

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Abstract

The writers of ancient literature of oriental civilizations did not give reference in their texts. The concept of giving references in texts was not heard of in those times. However, even in present times also many researchers do not cite the references or quote sources consulted by them, which can be described as an act of plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offence where a writer merely copies the ideas of the original writers without acknowledging them. Proper citation of the sources consulted or quoted in the text can help in avoiding plagiarism students of literature must use MLA handbook for making their research work acceptable by the readers all over the world. When MLA style manual was published for the first time in 1951, it was of only 31 pages, whereas 8th edition of the manual has 146 pages. It has kept pace with the changing times and this article highlights the changes made in the 8th edition of the MLA style sheet.

Keywords: Citation; MLA (Modern Language Association); Web; e-resources; Internet; In-Text Citations.

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1. Introduction

Writers of ancient literature of Oriental civilizations like Assyrian, Egyptian, Indian, Akkadian, Sumerian, Chinese, Greek etc. did not mention any studied sources. Only some clay tablets bear names of scribes or copyists and the period of writing. Literature in written form was very limited and also the readers. To give references in written materials or text was an unheard thing. 'Diamond Sutra', is the first complete survived manuscript, dated 11 May 868 A.D., written in Chinese but the text belongs to Buddhism. (b1.ukonlinegallery)

Era of handwritten manuscripts ended when Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1440 A.D. The first printed book was '42 line Bible'. With the passage of time, printing presses became popular throughout the world including India. Day by day the number of books as well as educational institutions went on increasing throughout the world. This process is still going on. In some countries, a number of higher educational institutions started courses in various

disciplines. At present, India has 800+ universities and about 39000+ colleges where thousands of students are studying and doing research in English literature. (we forum.org)

Now the students in schools, colleges, universities cannot write their assignments, research projects, dissertations etc., without depending on encyclopedias, books, e-books, e-journals, e-databases, e-articles etc. According to Ulrich's Periodical Directory, there are more than five thousands research journals in English literature in which thousands of articles are published every year. To count the number of books is a Sisphean job but according to Google, there are more than 12 crore books. It extends the scope of the students or researchers to consult a large number of sources in English literature.

However, most of these researchers never cite the reference or quote sources consulted by them. Most of the creative writers of English literature starting from Geoffrey Chaucer till the recent times, never cite any reference.

2. Internet

In the last decade of twentieth century, Internet became accessible throughout the world. In 2015 there were 3.2 billion Internet users and more than 971 million websites. In 2017, Internet users touched 51% of the total population of the world. (world in data org)

Almost all the research journals are available on Internet; billions of articles, blogs, freely accessible online-journals, e-databases, e-books and a large number of other sources are also available. Every student, writer, researcher and academician is using Internet. Although it is very useful yet it has also created a major problem of plagiarism. So far as number of PhD scholars is concerned it has increased in twentieth and twenty first century. (we forum.org) According to an estimate, about 1.5 million researchers have got PhD degrees in USA. Out of 7.3 billion population of the world approximately 15 million have PhD degrees. With the increase of publications of various types, there arose a need of some system about writing foot-notes and bibliography. It became essential to mention the sources used by the researchers/writers.

The scholars consult journals and other sources available and cite them in their research articles, books and PhD theses. (Ulrich's) Although there are a number of style guides, but for the students and researchers of literature in English there is only MLA Handbook 8th edition 2016.

3. MLA Handbook

In 1883 AD, some eminent scholars gathered to form an association to promote study of English language and research. The MLA style sheet was of only thirty one pages in 1951. It was published in five editions from 1977 to 1999. So far its title and content has also kept on changing. In 1999, the title was 'MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations; in 2003, the title was 'MLA Handbook for writers of Research Papers.'

The eighth edition changes the structure of the works cited list directly by adding abbreviations for volumes and issues (vol. and no.), pages (p. or pp.), not abbreviating words like 'editor' or

'translator', using URLs in most instances (though preferring DOI, as in APA), and not favoring the medium of publication.

"MLA has about 25,000 members in hundred countries around the world. Its MLA International Bibliography a major resource for researchers. PMLA Journal is 'Publications of the Modern Language Association' of America which was started in 1884-85 and is still continuing" (MLA Foreword). MLA Handbook 8th edition has foreword by Rosemary G. Feal and Preface by Katheleen Fitzpatrick. The book consists of two parts: Part 1 explains Principles of MLA Style and the Part 2 consists of Details of MLA Style.

"MLA (Modern Language Association) Handbook is the 'Style Bible' for generations of students." Some scholars started thinking that such style sheets may not be of use in the age of Internet when e-resources will dominate. However, their presumption proved wrong as references of various types appeared with e-resources. It is being used by writers of liberal arts and humanities.

"Sir Isaac Newton's famous words in a 1675 letter to Robert Hooke: If I have seen further it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants-may serve as a pithy reminder that even the most famous scientists depended on their forebears." (falconediting.com) The work done by forebearers should be acknowledged by every writer/researcher by citing sources.

From the beginning till 2016, the requirements of the students and teachers have been kept in mind. Now 'youtube', 'blog', 'tweet', 'video', 'news from online newspaper' etc., are additional sources that have been included in the 8th edition. Change is the law of nature. MLA style guide has always moved successfully with the changing times.

In the printed version of MLA Handbook, eighth edition, every entry has been explained with example and the entry point has been given blue shade. It is very useful and easy to understand. The seventh edition was changed because of extensive use of digital sources. The eighth edition is fully updated to make the writers aware how to cite the different types of digital sources. The reasoning behind it is basic: a style guide should offer a method that is widely applicable. Rather than insisting that writers follow strict citation formulas, this handbook outlines the principles of MLA documentation and explains how writers can use them in many different situations.

Like earlier editions, this handbook includes information on evaluating sources, avoiding plagiarism, using quotations, constructing abbreviations and other topics important to the scholarly writers. But what is different about the 8th edition is that it recommends a universal set of guidelines that writers can apply to any source, in any field. In the past, writers would create an entry in a works cited list by looking at MLA's instructions for how to cite a specific type of source. For example, if you need to cite a film, you would consult the handbook to see the proper format for documenting film. In this new edition, MLA explains that this method is no longer practical, since types of sources are sometimes indefinable or accessible in more than one way (for instance, a youtube clip from a film is not the same as the original film itself). Therefore, the eighth edition offers a new model for entries in a works cited list, so that rather than consulting the handbook for the proper way to document a specific type of source. "The writer creates

entries by consulting MLA's list of core elements and compiling them in the recommended order." (owl.englishpurdue)

"In today's world, forms of communication proliferate and publications migrate readily from one medium to another. An article published in a print journal may be discovered and read online, through one of many databases; an episode of a television series may be watched through a service like Hulu; a blog post may be republished as a book chapter. Even as we developed this edition of the MLA Handbook, new publication formats and platforms emerged" (MLA 3). It is felt that the writers need guidance because of too many printed and e-resources. Few principles are necessary but not a long list of rules.

4. Changes in 8th Edition

In 8th edition, a major change was made about how full citations are created and how MLA works cited pages are formatted Now we have one standard citation format that applies to every source type. The core elements are authors, title of the source, title of the container, other contributors, version, numbers, publishers, publication date and location. The appropriate punctuation mark must follow each core element and the last one is date. Another addition is 'the container' which means the major source which is italicised.

5. Other Contributors

For example, adapted by, directed by, edited by, illustrated by, introduction by, narrated by, performance by, translated by etc., are mentioned in the entry. Editions/versions should be mentioned e.g. 2nd ed., updated ed., version 1.3.1 etc. Some books are in multiple volumes therefore vol. number should be given e.g. vol. 5 (MLA 39) Publisher is very important for any style guide. It is either on the title page or on the verso of title page. Websites are published by various kinds of organizations, including museums, libraries, universities and their departments. "The publisher's name can often be found in a copyright notice at the bottom of the home page or on a page that gives information about the site" (MLA 41). "In printed sources the date is generally given but in the web-sources the date of online publication may appear at the site alongwith the date when the article appeared in print. Since you consulted only the online version of the article, ignore the date of the print publication" (MLA 43). Names, title of sources, in languages other than English like Italian, Spanish, Asian, French have also been described. To cite quotations is an excellent attempt to explain your views. Quote only words, phrases, lines and passages that are particularly apt, and keep all quotations as brief as possible', Writing should be yours whereas quotations only help in writing.

So far as in-text citations are concerned "the goals of the in text citation are brevity and clarity, guiding the reader as unobtrusively as possible to the corresponding entry in the works cited list. For example, a two-author entry includes last names connected by and (Dorris and Erdrich 23). If the source has three or more authors the entry in the works cited list begins with the first author's name followed by et al. e.g. (Burdick et al. 42)" (MLA 116)

Regarding titles, suggestion has been given that the first word should be mentioned in the text in brackets with page number instead of full title. e.g. (Travelling 42) e.g if you are writing lines or

Wordsworth then cite (97). If the text is yours and you want to quote i.e. (Wordsworth 263). (MLA 118) For the works of Shakespeare and the Bible, there are abbreviations e.g. "Rev. 21.3", for the Bible and "Mac. 1.5.17", for Shakespeare. (MLA 118)

Descriptive Terms in place of titles: "If a work is identified in the works-cited list by a descriptive term, not by a unique title, cite the term or a shortened version of it in place of the title if a title needs to be included in a parenthetical citation. The descriptive term should be capitalised exactly as the works cited list and the neither italicized not enclosed in quotation marks. (e.g. introduction XI-XII) (MLA 118-19) Margaret Drabble describes how publishers sometimes pressured Lessing to cut controversial details from her work or to add them (introduction XI-XII).

In text citation no use of punctuation marks is needed. However, if two or more citations are to be mentioned semicolon can be used to separate it e.g. (Baren 199; Jacobs 55) (MLA 126).

URLS have been included in the new edition. City of publication has been recommended to be removed. In 8th edition there is more flexibility in citation presentation. There is an advice that gives information of only those points which will prove useful to the readers. So far as citing sources are concerned these are 'print book, to cite a book chapter, e-book, e-book on a device, website, website with no author, a website with no web-page title, to cite a journal article found in print, to cite an essay, to cite an image from a website etc. (easylits.com)

6. Benefits of Citation

It may be any discipline, citation exposes the accuracy of the sources. A good researcher immediately finds inaccuracy of information. Some writers give references just to give impression that their study is based on a large number of sources. 'Quote' or 'some important lines' are immediately noticed as without 'quotation mark' will indicate plagiarism.

An efficient researcher, if expert in attribution will always avoid the stigma of plagiarism. Only a writer who has studied the article or book in print or e-form, will write correct name of the author, title and other details. Proper citation can make one reader a good researcher.

Those who want to be good writers and dream of being read all over the world should be proficient in attribution habits. Never adopt lethargic or sluggish routine, ambiguous or unsure mention of any source, careless or mediocre writing defames a person. No one can befool a good reader or a scholar in this age of Internet. Proper citation will remove the apprehension of 'retraction' of article due to plagiarism.

7. Bibliography

It consist of all those sources e.g. books, journals, articles, newspapers, web sites etc. You can present your capability and knowledge by preparing a good bibliography. In Social Sciences and Humanities we can judge the scholar's awareness of sources just by assessing the bibliography.

8. Credibility

Any scholar can get creditability if the reader feels that this article's author has covered almost all the important sources. Accurate citations create reliability or trust. The works cited give credit and honour to the early writers. Readers will appraise the usefulness, accuracy and genuineness of cited sources. Readers can pursue the topic further by reading cited sources. Academic honesty is must for the writers. Documenting sources is taught to students in advanced countries. Albeit all students are not going to be academicians yet it will definitely help them in any sector they get employment. Scientists, journalists, business or finance experts need to know the style manual. In developing countries, plagiarism is shamelessly flouted in schools, colleges and some universities. It is deception in writing when you don't give credit to the original writers. Sometimes original writers may point out about such 'cut paste' or 'blind copying' and the anti-plagiarism software will definitely point out this deception. Let the readers know what has been written by the author and what he has quoted from other sources.

Borrowing of certain lines, quotes without citation, and ideas stolen or copied from sources, without acknowledgment constitutes plagiarism. Students of literature must use MLA style which will make their writing acceptable all the world over.

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[4]   Our world in data org/internet
[5]   the nextweb.com/contributors 2017/04/11/current global state internet/# inw_qzowxzf
[6]   We forum.org agenda/2017/02. Countries with most doctoral degrees
[7]   Ulrich's periodical directory.
[8]   DOI stands for Digital Object Identifiers.
[9]   http://falconediting.com/en/blog/6 reason why citation of source_is_important when writing accessed 6 October 2017.
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