

UGS Internet Citation Guidelines

Providing citations and appropriate and clear references to those citations is an integral part of scholarly writing. The purpose of writing a thesis, dissertation, or professional publication is to communicate important findings and conclusions. The University Graduate School archives theses and dissertations with the idea that they form a valuable resource to future scholars. The inclusion of accurate references is absolutely essential if these works are to have value for scholars and researchers. If the referenced materials cannot be found it may undermine the ability of future workers to replicate or validate a study or conclusion. There is a well established tradition for the citing of literature and while there are minor variations among disciplines of study the general information included in citations is largely identical.

The availability of information on the internet, including websites, digital journals, makes the citation of information found uniquely at URL addresses unavoidable for some research and scholarly activities. Material that is available in other forms (books, journals, newspapers, government publications, etc.) should be cited using the traditional methods even when an internet site can be found on which the information is posted. The reasons for avoiding internet citations includes (1) information posted on the site is not the primary source of this information, i.e. the writer has abstracted information from other traditional primary sources, (2) the URL to the information may change, (3) the site is a private website that is unlikely to be maintained by the owner for any extended time period – this includes most types of personal websites even if they are on the server of a University or major corporation.

Internet citation styles are provided by APA and other style guides (see the link below).

<http://apastyle.apa.org/>

If you determine that a website must be cited then be sure to do so accurately.

The URL: The Uniform Reference Locator (URL), often referred to as the link to the document is critically important in providing a reliable means of finding cited documents.

Be sure that the link leads directly to the information cited. Avoid giving a reference to a home page that requires a reader to navigate to additional pages by identifying links on the page. Home pages are restructured from time to time and your reference may be moved to a secondary page or even deleted entirely. Be certain that the URL you provide is a functional link. Test each link you place in your thesis or dissertation to be sure it directs the browser to the desired webpage.

The DOI: The Document Object Identifier is a unique alphanumeric label that is assigned by a registration agency to each document. The DOI provides information about the content and a persistent link to the location of the document on the

internet. If a DOI is available it should be provided rather than the URL in the citation (for further information see the link below).

<http://www.apastyle.org/electmedia.html>

The University Graduate School has found that students are utilizing such sites as Wikipedia, on-line encyclopedias, and on-line dictionaries as authoritative sources. Encyclopedias are by their nature rarely a primary source and should not be the citation given for information in a theses or scholarly publication. There are a few exceptions to this and authorities in the field will recognize this because these sources will be commonly utilized in publications found in major journals within the discipline. Dictionaries may be cited if the accepted meaning or usage of a word with in a source is in question or an uncommon meaning or usage is ascribed to the word by the dictionary. For English language dictionaries only published editions of well recognized publishers should be referenced. Wikipedia and similar sites are often very informative to a novice and may even have extremely technical or sophisticated information. Entries on these sites, Wikipedia in particular, may be edited by readers who may introduce inaccuracies. Furthermore the information on a site of this type is inevitably the result of a research effort to summarize information that is available in journals and books. Do not site Wikipedia or similar sites and be careful not to abstract and paraphrase the information from these citations; if your work is compared to information on the net using a plagiarism software program this will be detected and it reflects poorly you.

Engineering and other technical disciplines rely heavily on the specifications of equipment and components produced commercially. These are often found in detail on websites. However, every company has a physical address and this is less likely to vary (particularly for the headquarters) than postings of material on their website. Long after a product is no longer marketed companies will maintain archives of their products and documents in their files even after they have removed the web posting. Providing a reference to the company address is often the preferred choice for such situations. If providing a URL link still seems helpful do so directly in the text rather than as a reference.

Lastly, there will be sites that need to be referenced but are not reliably maintained or the material on them is well known to change frequently. If the material is important to a reader it can be duplicated and included in an appendix. **Warning:** Do this only after obtaining permission from the copyright holder!