What is a bibliography?

A bibliography, also known as a reference list or works cited page, is a list of the resources used or referred to in your paper. This organized list, which is placed at the end of the research paper, offers greater details of your in-text citations.

In the past, bibliographies usually contained references to the books and magazine articles that were cited in the research. But today, a bibliography may also include citations to video, audio, and computer resources.

Why do I need a bibliography?

An accurate bibliography carries out two important functions. First, it helps the reader locate the sources cited in your research paper.

Just as importantly, good citations and bibliographies give due credit to the authors you cite in your paper. Acknowledging the work of others helps protect you from accusations of plagiarism, which is the uncredited use of source material by other writers.

What is an in-text citation?

If you quote, paraphrase, or summarize another's work, then you need to cite the source of that work in your research paper. This is known as an in-text citation. An in-text citation is an annotation which allows your reader to easily identify the source of your information.

What are style guides?

A style guide (or style manual) provides a set of standards for documenting your research. The formats they offer govern the entire paper, to include in-text citation and bibliography standards.

Two styles are commonly used by college students. They are known as MLA Style and APA Style. You should become familiar with both of them.

Ask your instructor which style should be used for documenting your current research project.

MLA Style

MLA (Modern Language Association) Style is most commonly used to write papers and cite sources within the liberal arts, such as English, History, Art, and Speech classes.

The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers is published by the Modern Language Association and is considered the authority on MLA Style.

APA Style

The APA (American Psychological Association) Style is the preferred choice for citing sources within the social sciences, such as Psychology and Sociology.

The reference format for APA style is described in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Library resources

The College of Marin Library offers a range of materials that can be consulted for quick reference as you research and document your sources. The following is a selected list of our more helpful guides:

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (6th Ed.)
Joseph Gibaldi
REF LB2369.G53 2003

A Pocket Style Manual (4th Ed.)
Diana Hacker
REF PE1408.H26 2004

Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th Ed.)
American Psychological Association
REF BF76.7.P83 2001

Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age (3rd Ed.)
Diana Hacker
REF LB2369.H33 2002

Rules for Writers (4th Ed.)
Diana Hacker
REF PE1408.H2778 2000

A Writer's Reference (4th Ed.)
Diana Hacker
REF PE1408.H2778 2001

Writing Research Papers: A Comprehensive Guide (10th Ed.)
James D. Lester, James D. Lester, Jr.
REF LB2369.L4 2001
Resources on the Internet

KnightCite KnightCite is an online citation generator. This service simplifies the often tedious task of compiling an accurate bibliography. You simply put in the information and it formats it for you. This eliminates the need to memorize minute details of style. You can give it a try at:

http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/

Easybib The MLA and APA style manuals can be fairly daunting to many of us. Easybib is another free automatic bibliography composer that takes the stress out of citations. Here’s their web site:

http://www.easybib.com/

OWL at Purdue The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University houses a wealth of writing resources and instructional material, all free of charge. Visit them at:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/

Diana Hacker The information on this site also appears in the print booklet Research and Documentation in the Electronic Age. Hacker’s site offers a glossary of terms and sample papers in both APA and MLA style formats. The URL is:

http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/