House Style Sheet
Library Communications & Publications

University Libraries
University of Arkansas
2010
These guidelines have been designed to help standardize the writing and editing styles used in the Libraries’ communications and publications directed either to a library audience or to a readership outside the library. The standards should be followed by library personnel who write or edit memoranda, letters, announcements, annual or other reports, grant proposals, publications of the library, or other official library communications. For the sake of consistency, the guidelines in this Style Sheet should override any style guidelines found in other resources which might differ from these. Effective style is not a precise science, and writing manuals will sometimes recommend different stylistic practices than are put forward here.

These guidelines are by no means complete. Most of them are merely important highlights drawn from standards prescribed by The Chicago Manual of Style (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 15th edition, 2003), although a few are not contained in the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS). When in doubt about any stylistic problem not mentioned in these guidelines, consult the CMS (available at the Reference Desk). If you remain uncertain about minor or debatable points, consistency is more important than any "final" determination of correctness. However, if any significant problem arises that you feel has not been adequately addressed by either the CMS or this style sheet, please call it to the attention of the assistant to the director so that guidelines can be added or refined as needed.

The assistant to the dean is available to help library staff with questions of style, usage, grammar, or expression, and in some cases (as time permits) with editing library communications. Also, the following are good guides for effective writing:


Improving Written Communications in Libraries, Jana and Larry Bardley. This is an oldy (1988!!), but still a goody in many respects in its overall advice.
Formal Names of the Library and University

The formal name of the library and its campus branches is the **University of Arkansas Libraries** OR the **University Libraries** OR the **Libraries** (this word used alone is capitalized since it is an ellipsis of “University Libraries”). Use "Mullins Library" *only* if it must be distinguished from the other libraries on campus or when it refers to the main campus library building. Just "library," of course, can be used informally in-house. All of the designations above in bold are considered *plural*

The formal name of our campus is the **University of Arkansas**, or, when necessary to distinguish it from other campuses within the University system, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (NOT University of Arkansas at Fayetteville). Likewise, use UAF only when you must distinguish this campus from the other campuses in abbreviated form. Other campuses of the University are designated as follows: the University of Arkansas at Little Rock or UALR; the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith; the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff or UAPB; the University of Arkansas at Monticello or UAM; the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences or UAMS; the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith or UAFS; Phillips Community College or PCCUA; the University of Arkansas Community College at Hope or ACCH; the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville or UACLB; the University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton or UACCM; Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas or CCCUA; University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville or UACCB; and Clinton School of Public Service or UACS.

**Titles of Institutions and Their Departments**

Full titles of institutions and their departments and divisions, as well as ellipses used to represent *specific* departments and divisions (not used generically), are capitalized:

- the University of Central Arkansas
- the Reference Department
- the School of Architecture
- the College of Engineering
- the College (referring to a previously mentioned specific college)
- a department / a college / a school / a library / a university
Personnel Titles

Titles of persons are in lowercase when used alone in place of a proper name or following a name, except in formal usage such as an address or complimentary close in a letter, memoranda headings, formal invitations/announcements, lists of contributors, etc.

the dean
the department head
music cataloger
head of Reference ("Reference" is used here as an ellipsis for a specific department)
Carolyn Henderson Allen, dean
Chyrel Banks, budget officer
Necia Parker-Gibson, associate librarian

Titles of Committees and Councils

These titles are usually capitalized when used elliptically to refer to a specific committee or council. When used generically, they are in lower case.

the Staff Concerns Council
Automation Committee
the Council
the Committee
councils / a council
committees / a committee

Numbers

In a narrative, whole numbers from one through ninety-nine are spelled out within a text, as well as any of these followed by "hundred," "thousand," "million," etc. If a number between one thousand and ten thousand can be spelled out in rounded terms of hundreds, that style is preferred rather than figures. It is often awkward to spell out two numbers or more when they occur as part of a list in one sentence or paragraph; figures are usually preferred in this case. When very large numbers are used (million, billion, etc.), the figure should be used, followed by "million" or "billion" spelled out. These rules apply for ordinal as well as cardinal numbers. Simple fractions
are spelled out, but decimal numbers are always written in figures. When a narrative or paragraph of a narrative contains many numbers, emphasizing statistical information, all of these numbers can be written in figures. In graphs and charts, of course, all the numbers are written in figures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>two-thirds</th>
<th>six hundred thousand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>five</td>
<td>600,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sixty-two</td>
<td>1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one hundred</td>
<td>1,355,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>five thousandth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thirty-six thousand</td>
<td>2.4 grade point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.05</td>
<td>ACT score of 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Percentages and Currency**

When designating percentages within a narrative, use the figure followed by the word "percent." Isolated references to amounts of money in United States currency are usually spelled out, although these are sometimes expressed in figures in accord with the general rules mentioned above regarding numbers. When amounts are emphasized in a text, however, the figure may be used. Thus, in reports or in library articles where there are lots of data, figures may be used. When presenting statistical data from a chart or graph, of course, use the figure or the figure and percent sign.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 percent</th>
<th>five hundred dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50 percent</td>
<td>forty thousand dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 percent</td>
<td>three hundred thousand dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>five cents</td>
<td>$456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two dollars</td>
<td>$2 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dates**

Unlike the *Chicago Manual*, this style sheet recommends that full dates be expressed in the more conventional order of month, day, and year. Commas should be placed before and after the year when the date is in the middle of a sentence. No punctuation is needed when referring to month and year only. Seasons of the year are in lowercase. Fiscal year should be identified with full numerical designations.
August 3, 1989
The deadline of May 6, 2007, is still effective.
January 2006
fall 2006
fiscal year 2001-2002

Abbreviations

Library abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided when at all possible when the reader/audience is the public or outside the library profession. Thus, only those abbreviations in common use and familiar to the reader/audience should be used unless a first reference has been spelled out with the abbreviation in parentheses. For example, do not write ACRL if the intended audience is a lay reader. Write instead, Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL). Subsequent references may be in abbreviated form. Common abbreviations should be designated with the appropriate spacing, punctuation, and capitalization as indicated below. Abbreviations of organizations, agencies, associations, and other groups are usually set in full caps with no periods. Abbreviated designations for morning or afternoon should be in small caps, as well as designations of “before” or “after” the common era.

9:00 A.M. ALA 1200 B.C.E. OCLC C&RL Newsletter

Italics and Quotation Marks

When mentioned in a text or in bibliographic format, titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, operas, movies, musical CD titles, video productions, television series, and works of art or long works of music are italicized (or underlined if italics are not available), with the first letter of each word capitalized (except articles and most prepositions). Individual titles of short musical works, periodical articles, book chapters, essays, lectures, short stories, poems, songs, unpublished manuscripts, television segments from television series, and exhibits are put in quotation marks.

Moby Dick Northwest Arkansas Times Journal of Abnormal Psychology
“Dover Beach” “The Lottery” “Somewhere Over the Rainbow”
Tootsie West Wing Carmen
Academic Degrees and Honors

Generally speaking, when an academic degree mentioned within a text is abbreviated and preceded by the word "the," the word "degree" should follow the name of the degree. This is optional when the name of the degree is abbreviated and preceded by "a." When the full title of the degree is spelled out, it is put in caps and followed by "degree." The degree is in lowercase with an apostrophe when referred to generically. Within a text, the titles of degrees should be either consistently abbreviated or consistently spelled out.

- a B.A. / a B.A. degree
- an M.L.S. / an M.L.S. degree
- the Ph.D. degree / the M.S. degree
- a doctor’s degree
- a master’s degree

She received a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1981.
He received a master's degree in 1965.

Singulars and Plurals

The following are considered to be singular unless members of that unit act individually or are not considered to act as a harmonious unit:

- The staff is invited to the reception.
- The faculty are in disagreement.
- The committee made its decision.
- The team changed their clothes after the game.

A Word about Hyphens

Do two adjectives or two nouns placed together require a hyphen? It depends. If you are unsure if two adjectives need to be hyphenated (e.g., an accident free driver), ask yourself this question: When you take away either of the adjectives, does the phrase...
still make full sense? For example, does the phrase make sense with only the first adjective (accident) minus the second adjective (free)?—accident driver? No, you are referring to an accident-free driver. Another example is “twentieth century literature.” It doesn’t make sense to say “twentieth literature.” So you know that the phrase is to be regarded as a unit with a hyphen. In the phrase “fine old building,” however, you do mean to say that the building has two qualities: fine and old; the adjectives are independent of one another and do not require a hyphen to link them.

**Spellings for Terms in the Electronic World**

The *Chicago Manual* has not established a standard spelling yet for most terms in the electronic world, and there are very few, if any other guides for spelling. In the meantime, *consistency of spelling and capitalization* within a document is the most important criterion. However, as a guide in the interim, use the following recommendations (some of these are unofficially preferred by CMS editors), although consistency is more important than any particular “correct” use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internet</th>
<th>Web (Web site)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e-mail / email</td>
<td>online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URL</td>
<td>e-book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>CD-ROM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A note about designating URLs in the text: According to editors at CMS, when the breaking of an URL at the end of a line is necessary, breaking it after a slash is preferable. It is true that putting a duplicate slash at the beginning of the next line can help clarify that what follows is still part of the URL (the second slash has no effect on how the URL works). However, CMS editors say that “breaking an URL after a dot (leaving what looks like a period at the end of a line) might cause difficulties for the reader. It would be better to place the dot at the beginning of the next line. Using a hyphen to break a long word at the end of a line is not a good idea, since some URLs contain hyphens as part of the address. Instead, break the word between syllables but omit the hyphen. You might also consider setting off URLs in a special way (e.g., with angle brackets &lt; &gt;).”

**Substantive Modifiers**

Substantive modifiers are basically nouns that are used as adjectives rather than
as objects of a preposition (e.g., "growth trend" instead of "trend in growth"). They are nouns that modify other nouns—often appearing in a string of three or four or five. Substantive modifiers have grown rampant in the library field (as well as many other fields), creating difficult-to-read phrases and jargon. But they often cannot be avoided, and some of them can be understood with relative ease despite their awkwardness and cacophonous sound. However, they should never be preferred in general communications when a simpler expression in plain English can be substituted. Avoid them particularly when they cloud the meaning and require the reader to reread sentences more than once or twice to understand them. Words should be chosen to clarify meaning, not to obscure it.

The following are examples of the kinds of substantive modifiers to be avoided when at all possible in favor of clearer and “simpler” communication:

- library patron circulation utilization
- subject bibliography preparation process
- library performance evaluation system
- information manipulation and analysis tools

Active/Passive Voice

When it comes to deciding between active and passive voice, writers should think about two things: What they wish to emphasize and how the sentence sounds. If they wish to emphasize the doer of the action, they should use active voice; but if they wish to emphasize the receiver of the action, they should use passive voice. On the other hand, if the sentence sounds affected and weak, they are probably using passive voice when active voice would be far more effective. Examples:

When the receiver of the action is more important than the doer, the passive voice is preferable and sometimes more effective, for example:

- As Tom walked home late Saturday night from the neighborhood bar, he was accosted by a mugger.

Here, the writer wishes to emphasize Tom, the one who was accosted and mugged, not the unknown mugger, who accosted Tom then vanished into the night with Tom’s wallet.
• “There in the tin factory, in the first moment of the atomic age, a human was crushed by books.” — John Hersey (Seldes, 1985)

Here, Hersey is emphasizing the “human” who was crushed by books, not the books that did the crushing.

**On the whole, however, in plain narrative, it is more effective to use active voice:**

Weak: Some of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies were written by him after the death of his young son Hamnet.

Stronger: Shakespeare wrote some of his greatest tragedies after the death of his young son Hamnet.

**Bibliographic Style**

Bibliographies or works cited should always reflect a consistent standard form recommended by the most recent edition of any appropriate traditional bibliographic style manual chosen by the writer (i.e., MLA, Chicago Manual, APA, APSA, CBE). To consult these various style manuals, see the following URL on the Libraries’ Web site:

**Grammar Resources**

There are a number of grammar resources in print and on the Web. Most are fine, although beware of weird and unorthodox advice in some Web sites. Stick to the more reliable grammar resources (most grammar and usage handbooks published by major houses are reliable like Fowler; Oxford; Longman; Little, Brown; McGraw Hill). The OWL grammar guide from the Purdue Online Writing Lab is also very good:

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html#Capitals](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/index.html#Capitals)

A grammar handbook is also available at the Reference Desk.

**Editorial Marks**

When a journal editor or the Libraries’ own assistant to the dean edits library communication, she or he will use standard editorial marks in editing. These may be
found at the following URL:

http://creativeservices.iu.edu/resources/guide/marks.shtml