



Council on Library &
Information Resources

Style Guide

2026 edition

1. Introduction

The *CLIR Style Guide* assists staff and consultants in writing and editing CLIR publications. It identifies rules for providing a reader experience that is consistent and conversant with the organization's mission and the needs of the communities it serves. The guide is arranged in three sections:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Notes to Authors and Editors**
- 3. Style: Quick Reference**

CLIR's style rules are based predominantly on *The Chicago Manual of Style, 18th Edition*. Since many of our publications contain computer terminology, we also use the [Microsoft Writing Style Guide](#). In matters of style, Chicago rules, but if there is a difference of opinion on the same subject, authors can depart from Chicago norms in cases that better serve the intended audience for the publication (that is, defer to the Microsoft Guide if you are targeting a predominantly technical audience). Above all, you should be consistent in your application of any rule throughout a publication.

A standard dictionary is essential to writing and editing work. Different dictionaries treat the same words differently in their meanings, hyphenations, and acceptable use. We use *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Twelfth Edition*.

Two excellent references on writing that cover questions of use, meaning, grammar, and punctuation are *The Careful Writer* by Theodore Bernstein, and *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White.

2. Notes to Authors and Editors

Text Submission Guidelines

- Unless directed otherwise, submit files in Microsoft Word.
- Use single line spacing for text, and double line spacing between paragraphs.
- Use single spaces between sentences, not double.
- Do not use a first-line indent at the start of each paragraph.
- Indicate italics, bold, lower case, caps, heads, and subheads where appropriate. Extensive text formatting is discouraged since we usually reformat in a page layout program.
- Include a table of contents that clearly shows the hierarchy of headings and subheadings as they appear in the text.
- Any illustrations (charts, graphs, maps, logos, and photos) must accompany the original manuscript. They must be print quality, high resolution (300dpi or better), and submitted separately from the manuscript. Uncompressed file formats (e.g. TIFF, JPEG2000) are preferred for photos; lossless image formats (e.g. PNG, SVG) are good for other graphics such as data tables or illustrations. Other formats may be acceptable depending the intended size on the page in the publication layout. Indicate where illustrations should be placed in the text by inserting a caption. Captions are usually preceded by “Fig. 1:” or “Table 1:”. Tables and Figures are numbered separately. See *tables and illustrations* in the Quick Reference section for further details.
- References to other works, if used, must be complete. See *source citations* in the Quick Reference section for examples of how to treat different types of references.

Title

Give careful thought to the title of your publication. A good title contains key words that make it easy for a reader to decide whether the publication is of interest. A good title is also as short as possible and stripped of detailed information, such as the dates or location of a conference or workshop.

Introductory Material

A CLIR staff member or designee often writes a preface for a publication indicating the purpose and scope of the project and its significance to library and information science, cultural heritage, or knowledge creation and organization. The author should also provide a brief introduction and background section at the beginning of the main body of the text, giving an overview of what the report covers. This section should be written in a way that nonspecialists will understand, since CLIR's audience includes the academic community, policymakers, and in some cases, the press and the informed public. For longer reports, CLIR may request that an author provide an Executive Summary that distills key findings and recommendations. Authors should provide one paragraph of biodata for an "About the Author(s)" page. Authors may also include acknowledgments, if desired.

Chapter Openings and Headings

CLIR requires text between chapter heads and first-level headings, and between first- and second-level headings. There should be at least two or three sentences introducing the sections or subsections to follow. There should be at least two headings of the same level in any section or subsection.

Distinctive Treatment of Words

Use italics to denote a word referred to as a word or term, at least the first time it appears. For example, "The terms *authentication*, *authorization*, and others associated with access management are defined in Appendix D."

Reduce as much as possible the use of quotation marks for emphasis or irony.

Formality

CLIR style, while not purely scholarly, is generally formal in tone. For example, authors should avoid contractions (*didn't*, *won't*) and words conveying a spoken or less formal style, except in direct quotations.

References and Source Citations

References are indicated using Chicago's author-date system of documentation; that is, parenthetical author-date references within the text and a corresponding

reference list (headed “References”) that follows the body of the report. The author is responsible for the accuracy and completeness of all references cited. Entries to works not directly cited in the text should not be included in the reference list. Authors may include such entries in a separate list headed “Recommended Reading,” or something similar.

See *source citations* in the Quick Reference section for further information; and Chicago, chapters 13, 14, and the [Citation Quick Guide, Author-Date: Sample Citations](#).

Use footnotes for comments or asides only. Do not use footnotes for URLs or DOIs only.

Permissions

The author is responsible for obtaining all permissions that may be required to reproduce any illustrations or to reproduce or quote from any previously published material. Permissions must be obtained in writing and should be submitted with the manuscript.

Person, Tense, and Voice

Throughout the manuscript, authors should maintain consistency in point of view (“we” for first person plural or “the team” for third person), tense (present or past), and, as much as possible, active voice. You and your editor will save time if you decide together on these choices early in the drafting stage. Prefer first person to phrases like “the present writer” – use “I,” or “we” for multiple authors. Do not use “we” for a single author or to mean the author and reader. Limited use of “we” to refer to humanity, the nation, or the library or academic community is acceptable.

Tables and Illustrations

See *tables and illustrations* in the Quick Reference section.

Website Addresses (URLs)

CLIR prefers to avoid references to website addresses in narrative text to minimize frustrations for future readers, since these addresses may resolve differently or fail completely within a relatively short period. Such a reference

should serve some purpose other than simply pointing to an obvious, general source for further information, such as providing the URL of an institution mentioned in the text. In principle, URLs should appear only in reference lists. When available, DOI-based URLs should be provided.

For electronic sources in reference lists, add the URL following the full facts of publication, per Chicago 13.6. Internet document citations should match the model of print publications where possible.

Provide as complete a citation to web-published works as you would for works in print.

Hyphenation

Hyphens may be omitted in all cases where there is little or no risk of ambiguity or hesitation. For example:

The document was printed on machine-made paper.

BUT The paper was machine made.

3. Style: Quick Reference

a and an

Before a pronounced *h*, long *u* (or *eu*), and such a word as *one*, the indefinite article should be *a*:

a historical study, a hotel

BUT an honor, an heir

acknowledgment (no *e* between *g* and *m*)

acronyms (and abbreviations)

Spell out acronyms and abbreviations the first time they are used in each chapter. This does not mean the full name can never be used again; sometimes it is helpful to the reader to spell it out again.

add-on

and/or

We agree with Bernstein that *and/or* is “*a visual and mental monstrosity*” and with Strunk and White that it is “*a device or shortcut that damages a sentence.*” Where the choice of one conjunction or the other will not work, the solution is to write out in plain English, *x*, *or y*, *or both*.

apostrophes

three Rs (not three R's)

1920s (not 1920's)

PCs (not PC's)

See also, *possessives*

appendix, appendixes (do not use *appendices*)

approximately

Use *about* unless actual approximation method has been used.

back up (v), **backup** (n)

bandwidth

bibliographies, see *source citations*

BIPOC

Spell out first mention: Black, Indigenous and people of color

bits per second

Spell out first mention, but then abbreviate to *bps*. If you are sure the audience knows the term, you do not need to spell it out.

bitstream

Black

Capitalize when describing people and cultures of African origin.

black-and-white (adj)

Hyphenate before noun (*black-and-white photograph*); **black and white** after noun (*shown in black and white*).

Board

Always use a capital when referring to CLIR's *Board*

British spelling

Use American preferred spelling for words with British variants (e.g., *toward*, not *towards*; *benefiting*, not *benefitting*; *traveling*, not *travelling*). However, retain British spelling if citing a proper name (e.g., *United Nations Development Programme*) or in direct quotations from written sources.

capitalization

TITLES AND OFFICES

Use lower case except in cases of named positions, or when names and titles appear in a list.

the provost

head of the library department

Charles Henry, president of CLIR

Edward Ayers, Tucker-Boatwright Professor of the Humanities

Professor Peter Norsag

Marcello Sonata, professor of music

ORGANIZATION NAMES

Capitalize full organization names but not shortened versions:

Digital Library Federation; the federation.

the or *The* in ORGANIZATION NAMES

Use cap when using full name, *The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library*, lower case when using shortened name, *the Beinecke*.

Lowercase *t* for the following unless at the beginning of a sentence:

the Board

the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR alone does not use *the*)

the Digital Library Federation (DLF alone does not use *the*)

See also *foundations and important contributors* for use of *the* or *The*.

catalog (not *catalogue*)

CD-ROM

centuries

Spell out when used in text

fourteenth century (not 14th century)

client/server

Use the slash mark

currency (see *money*)

data

Treat as plural: The data are clear.

decision makers (no hyphen)

degrees

Omit periods in abbreviations of academic degrees. See Chicago 10.23.

BA, MA, MBA, PhD

diaspora

Lower-case, unless referring to Jews living outside Palestine

digital-based (adj)

DLF

Refer to it as *DLF* in normal writing.

DLF commissioned a survey of recent literature.

double-click

dpi

due to

Do not use it as a prepositional phrase. Use *because of*, *owing to*, or *through* instead. See Bernstein or Strunk and White for further explanation.

email

Do not use a hyphen. Do not use *emails* for plural; use *email messages*.

end user (n), end-user (adj)

Avoid; use *user*, *customer*, or *you* instead

footnotes

Use numbered notes at the foot of the page for comments or asides only. See *source citations* for formatting references to other works.

foundations and important contributors

Full names and spellings are below. If *The* is part of the full name as shown, it should always be included and must have a cap, even in the middle of a sentence.

the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation

the Mellon Foundation

The Kresge Foundation

EDUCAUSE

Institute of Museum and Library Services

Library of Congress

foreign words

Isolated foreign words and phrases may be set in italics if they are likely to be unfamiliar to readers.

Familiar words and phrases in a foreign language should be set in roman type (e.g., *fait accompli*, *raison d'être*, *a priori*)

FTE

Spell out the first time used. *Full-time equivalent* or *full-time employee*.

full time (adv), **full-time** (adj)

GB, abbreviation for *gigabyte*

gigabyte, abbreviate as GB.

Spell out in straight text. Use abbreviation with numerals.

gray scale (n, predicate adj, and adj following n), **gray-scale** (adj preceding n)

hard copy (n), **hardcopy** (adj)

high-resolution (adj)

hyphens

decision maker

vice president

illustrations see *tables and illustrations*

Indigenous

Capitalize when referring to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands.

initials

The space between initials should be the same as the space between initial and name:

R. W. B. Lewis, not R.W.B. Lewis

internet (lower case)

intranet, **extranet**

KB, abbreviation for *kilobyte*

kilobit

Always spell out, do not abbreviate to *Kbit*.

kilobyte

Abbreviate to *KB*.

listserv

livestream (one word)

logos

CLIR brand guidelines and brandmark and wordmark files are available at <https://www.clir.org/about-us/clir-brandmark/>. Images are provided in a variety of resolutions for web and print. If you are unsure of which file to select, select a file with a .png extension since this is common and easy to work with. You may prefer a file in vector format such as the Scalable Vector Graphics (.svg) format—vector formats let you resize an image without distortion. Some formats support a transparent background instead of white; those formats include .eps, .png, .svg, .ai, .psd, and .tif. Files in .jpg format do not support transparency.

MB, abbreviation for *megabyte*

megabyte

Abbreviate to *MB*.

metadata

Treat as plural.

macro, micro

Generally not hyphenated when used as prefixes.

money

Isolated references to amounts of money in US currency are spelled out or expressed in numerals in accord with the general rules for numerals. If the number is spelled out, so is the unit of currency, and if numerals are used, the symbol \$ or ¢ is used:

The fare has been raised to 25¢ (or \$.25).

Hundreds of collectors paid five dollars each to attend the event.

The cost of registration was US\$9,000.

Other currencies:

When letters other than symbols are used, a space separates the letter(s) from the numeral:

forty euros = EUR 40, or €40

725 yen = ¥725

multi

Generally do not hyphenate words beginning with *multi*.

non

Generally not hyphenated as a prefix: *nonprint*, *nonprofit*.

numbers

In text, spell out whole numbers from one to nine. Numerals are used for all other numbers. See Chicago 9.3 and 9.7.

Very large numbers may be expressed in numerals followed by million, billion, etc.

By the end of the fourteenth century, the population of Britain had reached 2.3 million.

Numbers applicable to the same category should be treated alike within the same context; do not use numerals for some and spell out others.

The project required 2 camera operators during the first year, 6 operators the second year, and 18 in the third year.

At the beginning of a sentence any number that would ordinarily be set in numerals is spelled out, regardless of any inconsistency this may create.

One hundred men and 103 women will receive degrees.

If an abbreviation is used for the unit of measure, the quantity should always be expressed as a numeral.

16 MBps network

online, offline

onsite, offsite

onscreen

papermaking

PCs

part time (adv), **part-time** (adj)

percent

Write it out when used in text, do not use % unless in tabular matter.

possessives

Burns's poems (not Burns' poems)

Library of Congress's books (not Library of Congress' books)

punctuation

COMMAS

Use the serial comma:

Larry, David, and Alice spoke.

James Adams Jr. died. (No comma preferred)

QUOTATIONS

Run short quotations (up to eight lines) into the text and enclose them in quotation marks. Long quotations or extracts should be indented in a separate paragraph block without quotation marks. Use the indent command for this purpose; not the tab key. Place commas inside closing quotation marks: “this,” rather than “this”, is correct. But there are cases when the period should be placed after the quotation mark, such as when using an author-date parenthetical citation with a run-in quotation. Follow Chicago guidance regarding ellipses and author-date citations for run-in and block quotations (chapters 6 and 12).

QUOTE MARKS AROUND WORDS

Chicago allows for quotes when a standard technical term is used in a nonstandard way and for words used in an ironic sense. We feel the emphasis should be on the Chicago qualification, “Such use of quotation marks should always be regarded as a last resort, to be used when the irony might otherwise be lost. Skillfully prepared for, an ironic meaning seldom eludes the reader even though quotation marks are not used.” We extend this to the use of most nonstandard uses of words.

VERTICAL LISTS

Use numbers for items in a list only when numbered points are discussed in the text, or when the list contains a sequence.

Use a period without parentheses after numerals or letters used to enumerate items in a vertical list:

1. the Bay of Pigs
2. the Berlin Airlift

Numerals or letters enumerating items in a list within a paragraph should be enclosed in parentheses and should not be followed by a period.

Omit periods after items in a vertical list unless one or more of the items are complete sentences. If the vertical list completes a sentence begun in

an introductory element, the final period is also omitted unless commas or semicolons separate the items in the list:

The following metals were excluded from the regulation:

molybdenum

mercury

manganese

After careful investigation the committee was convinced that

1. the lawyer had consulted no one before making the decision;
2. the chair, Smith, had never spoken to Watson;
3. Smith was as surprised as anyone by what happened.

If the vertically listed items are phrases, especially long phrases, that grammatically complete the sentence containing them, commas may, but need not, be used. If commas are used, the last item is followed by a period.

A colon should not be used to introduce a list that is the complement or object of an element in the introductory statement.

read-only (adj)

real-time (adj)

seasons

Lower cased: *spring, fall* etc.

setup (n), **to set up** (v)

source citations

CLIR uses Chicago's author-date system for citations and references. Basic elements are covered below, but you must reference Chicago, chapters 13, 14, and the [Citation Quick Guide, Author-Date: Sample Citations](#) for issues not mentioned.

The author-date system comprises two parts: the text citation, usually enclosed in parentheses, and a corresponding reference list. Only brief identifying information is provided in the text and full documentation is provided in the reference list.

The citation in the text consists of the author's last name and the year of

publication of the work, in parentheses. If no author is listed, use the name of the organization publishing the information:

(American Sociological Association 2008)

(Annas and Elias 1999)

(Balduzzi et al. 2012)

(Beecher 1966)

The citation should be placed where it offers the least resistance to the flow of thought, usually just before a punctuation mark.

It is not surprising, therefore, that researchers expressed uncertainty about the best procedures for adopting data management protocols and making decisions regarding appropriate data access (Asher and Jahnke 2013).

A corresponding reference list should appear in alphabetical order at the end of the report. As an example, using the above citations:

American Sociological Association. 2008. *American Sociological Association Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics*. Washington, DC. doi:10.1111/j.0028-1425.2007.ethics.x.

Annas, George J., and Sherman Elias. 1999. Thalidomide and the Titanic: Reconstructing the Technology. *American Journal of Public Health* 89 (1): 98–101.

Asher, Andrew, and Lori M. Jahnke. 2013. Curating the Ethnographic Moment. *Archive* 3 (Summer). Available at <http://www.archivejournal.net/issue/3/archives-remixed/curating-the-ethnographic-moment/>.

Balduzzi, Marco, Jonas Zaddach, Davide Balzarotti, and Sergio Loureiro. 2012. A Security Analysis of Amazon's Elastic Compute Cloud Service. In *Proceedings of the 27th Annual ACM Symposium on Applied Computing*, 1427–1434. New York: Association for Computing Machinery.

Beecher, H. K. 1966. Ethics and Clinical Research. *New England Journal of Medicine* 274 (24): 1354–1360.

If a specific page or volume is cited, it follows the date in the citation and is preceded by a comma. When reference to both volume and page number is required, a colon separates them. A reference to a volume as a whole, without a page number, requires *vol.* for clarity:

(Waters 2006, 42)

(Henry 1998, 3:114)

(Graham 2012, vol. 2)

Titles of works should be capitalized in headline style per Chicago.

Titles of books and periodicals are italicized. Titles of chapters, articles, and other short pieces are set in roman type without quotation marks.

As in bibliographies, a 3-em dash can replace the name of the author, editor, compiler, or translator for successive works attributed to the same person.

Citing websites, blogs, and social media

Websites: Include an access date in citations of websites and other sources consulted online only if no date of publication or revision can be determined from the source. In such cases, record *n.d.* as the date of publication in the reference list entry and for the in-text citation. To avoid conflation with the name of the author, *n.d.* is always lowercase.

Alliance for Linguistic Diversity. n.d. "Balkan Romani."
Endangered Languages. Accessed May 10, 2021.
<http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/lang/5342>.

In-text citation would be (Alliance for Linguistic Diversity, n.d.)

For sources that include a date of publication or revision, use the year of publication in the reference list entry. Repeat the year with the month and day to avoid any confusion.

Google. 2021. "Privacy Policy." Privacy & Terms. Last modified July 1, 2021. <http://www.google.com/policies/privacy>.

In-text citation would be (Google 2021)

Blogs: Blogs and blog posts are cited in author-date format by adapting the guidelines provided above.

Kim, Joshua. 2022. How Selective Might Elite Universities Be in 2050? *Learning Innovation* (blog), *Inside Higher Ed*. January 30, 2022.
<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/learning-innovation/how-selective-might-elite-universities-be-2050>.

In-text citation would be (Kim 2022)

Social Media: Cite publicly available content shared via social media as follows. Private content, including direct messages, is considered a form of personal communication and should be cited as such. The citation should include

- The author of the post (real name, if known, followed by screen name, if any, in parentheses; if only the screen name is known use that in place of author's name)
- In place of a title, the text of the post. Quote as much as the first 160 characters, including spaces, capitalized as in the original. If the post has been quoted in the text, it need not be repeated in a note.
- The type of post. List the name of the social media service and include a description if relevant (photo, video, etc.)
- The date, including month, day, and year. Time stamps are usually unnecessary but may be included to differentiate a post or comment from others on the same day.
- A URL

Social media citation examples:

Casey, Jim (@jimccasey1). 2022. "FYI the open list of Black Digital Humanities Projects & Resources just passed 400 entries." Twitter, January 22, 2022.

<https://twitter.com/jimccasey1/status/1484992290510811143>.

In-text citation would be (Casey 2022)

Souza, Pete (@petesouza). 2016. "President Obama bids farewell to Persident Xi of China at the conclusion of the Nuclear Security Summit." Instagram photo, April 1, 2016.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/BDrmfXTtNCt>.

In-text citation would be (Souza 2016)

Citing unpublished interviews and personal communications

In a parenthetical citation, the terms personal communication (or *pers. comm.*), *unpublished data*, and the like may be used after the name/s of the person/s concerned, following a comma. If the medium is important and

not mentioned in the text, it may be incorporated into the parenthetical reference. *Reference list entries are unneeded, though each person cited must be fully identified elsewhere in the text.* Initials may be used for first names. Unless it is mentioned in the text, a date should be added in parentheses, following a comma. The abbreviation *et al.* should be avoided in such citations. See Chicago 14.111.

(Julie Cantor, pers. comm.)

(Jonathan Lee, Facebook direct message to author, May 5, 2017)

(Brenda Hasbrouck, text message to author, May 5, 2017)

(A. P. Moller, unpublished data; C. R. Brown and M. B. Brown, unpublished data)

spaces

Use single spaces between sentences in text, not double spaces.

The space between initials should be the same as the space between initial and name

R. W. B. Lewis, not R.W.B. Lewis.

stand-alone (adj)

state names

In running text, the names of states, territories, and possessions of the United States should always be spelled out when standing alone and preferably (except for DC) when following the name of a city: for example, “Lake Bluff, Illinois, was incorporated in 1895.” In bibliographies, lists, tabular matter, and mailing addresses, they are usually abbreviated. Chicago prefers the two-letter postal codes to abbreviations. See Chicago 10.34.

tables and illustrations

Any illustrations (charts, graphs, maps, logos, and photos) must accompany the original manuscript. They must be print quality, high resolution (300dpi or better), and submitted separately from the manuscript. Uncompressed file formats (e.g. TIFF, JPEG2000) are preferred for photos; lossless image formats (e.g. PNG, SVG) are good for other graphics such as logos or illustrations. Other formats may be acceptable depending the intended size on the page in the publication layout.

Tables are set in type whereas illustrations are typically reproduced from digital

artwork using a graphics software package.

Indicate where illustrations should be placed in the text by inserting a caption or brackets with a lower resolution copy of the file. Captions are usually preceded by “Fig. 1:” or “Table 1:”. Tables and Figures are numbered separately.

Every table and illustration should be given a number and should be cited in the text by that number, either directly or parenthetically. Tables and illustrations are separately numbered. Illustrations are referred to as *figures*. Use Arabic numerals:

The steps for the emulation approach are illustrated in figure 2.

He presented a diagram to illustrate the elements of access management (figure 2).

If these assumptions are true, the changes in unit costs are remarkable (table 4).

Captions for tables and illustrations should be typed using sentence-style capitalization. No period should follow the title. “Figure” should be abbreviated to “Fig.” with a period placed after the figure number when a caption follows.

Fig. 2. An encapsulated digital document

Table 4. Projected costs per volume over 10 years

See Chicago for more discussion on handling illustrations and captions, and for discussion on formatting tables. CLIR style allows great latitude in the appearance of tables. The important issue is to apply consistency in appearance and labeling among all tables within a publication.

that vs. which

From *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White:

That is the defining, or restrictive pronoun, *which* the nondefining, or nonrestrictive.

The lawn mower that is broken is in the garage. (Tells which one.)

The lawn mower, which is broken, is in the garage. (Adds a fact about the only mower in question.)

See also *The Careful Writer* by Theodore Bernstein.

timeframe

time zones

When spelled out, are lower cased.

daylight saving time (DST)

eastern standard time (EST)

trade-off**titles, "Dr."**

Use *Dr.* only for qualified medical people, unless the correct alternative is not known or it would seem perverse to use *Mr.* (e.g., Dr. Martin Luther King).

toward, not towards**under way (adv), underway (adj)****US, USA**

No periods. See Chicago 10.4.

Use abbreviations only when used as a modifier: *US politics*; spell out when used as a subject or object: *The United States has vast natural resources.*

vice president (no hyphen)**website (no initial cap), webpage, the Web, or World Wide Web****White****workflow****workgroup****workstation****x (by)**

Acceptable in *600 x 600 resolution*, but use *8 1/2 by 11-inch paper*.

x-ray (v), X ray (n), X-ray (adj)**%, see percent**