REFERENCE SYSTEMS DECIPHERED FOR YOU

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ABSTRACT

Bibliographic references are used to indicate the author’s sources and to enable the reader to find these sources. They are a vital part of any written academic work. It is essential to cite information sources consulted in order to guard against plagiarism, avoid making unsupported statements and to support statements you make within the text of your work.

KEY WORDS: Bibliography, References, Harvard System, Vancouver System.

INTRODUCTION

There are two basic systems in use for the format of references [1]. These are:
1. The Harvard System which is used most frequently in the biological literature
2. The Vancouver System which is used most frequently in medical literature

A reference list has all the references that have actually been cited (quoted directly or indirectly) in the text. A bibliography also contains the references to additional works to which no direct reference has been made, but which have helped to construct the essay. For most purposes a bibliography is used which contains both the quoted references and other material that has been looked at [2,3].

THE HARVARD SYSTEM

In this format, references in the text are indicated by placing the author’s name and date of publication, including page numbers if necessary, in parentheses at the appropriate point. For example, (Field, 1989:12-15). In the list of references at the end of the project, references are listed alphabetically by authors' name, with the year of publication given immediately after the name of the author. At the same time, the titles of books, periodicals, newspapers, encyclopedias etc., are underlined or italicised. All journal titles must be written in full. Authors can be in upper or lower case.

In the text the author’s surname and the year of publication can be given in one of the forms shown below:

- In a recent study Dunham (1997) argued that.....
- A recent study (Dunham 1998) shows that...

When an author has published more than one cited document in the same year, these are distinguished by adding lower case letters (a, b, c etc) after the year and within the parentheses e.g., Johnson (1996a) discussed the subject...

If there are two authors, the surnames of both should be given e.g., Matthews and Jones (1998) have proposed that...

If there are three authors, quote all three names the first time you cite them in the body of the essay, then abbreviate this by using et al. Give all three name in the reference list at the end. If there are more than three authors use et al in the text and the reference list. Wilson et al (1993) conclude that...

As references are listed in alphabetical order by authors' name, if you have cited more than one item by a specific author they should be listed chronologically (earliest first), and by letter (1996a 1998b) if more than one item has been published during a specific year.

The following are examples of references from various types of resources

1. Journals

2. Books and Other Monographs
DAUSSET, J. and COLOMBANI, J. (eds.) (1973)
Histocompatibility testing 1972, Copenhagen, Munksgaard.

3. Conferences

4. Newspaper Article

5. Multimedia Material

6. Internet and Other Electronic Sources

7. Journal article in electronic format

8. WWW Sites

**THE VANCOUVER SYSTEM**
The Vancouver system of referencing is commonly used in medical literature. It may also be the preferred referencing system in non-medical literature where the problem of multiple references at a single point in the text occurs frequently. In this system an Arabic number, which appears as a superior figure in the text, is allocated to each source as it is referred to for the first time. This number becomes the unique identifier of that source and if the source is referred to again the identifying number is repeated. In addition, more than one identifier can be used at a single reference point to indicate multiple sources, for example:

Information has been published on international trends in the treatment of cardiovascular disease;¹,⁵ while of particular interest is an Australian study on hypertension.²

Note that the identifiers (which refer to the works listed) are placed outside the text punctuation to avoid disruption. Note also that commas used to separate identifiers at the same reference point are also set as superior characters.

The presentation of the source citation in the Vancouver system differs from other referencing systems already described in the following respects:

- The titles of books and articles are always given minimal capitalisation.
- Journal articles are not placed within quotation marks.
- Neither book titles nor journal titles are italicised.
- Journal titles are abbreviated and abbreviations used should be those listed in the most recent issue of the Index Medicus (Medline) [4].
- All authors should be listed when there are six or fewer; when there are more than six, only the first three are listed and the expression ‘et al.’ is added.
- Authors’ initials follow the surnames and are set without full stops or space.

The following list exemplifies the style of Vancouver citations and the points made in the previous paragraph:

- In the Vancouver system a number is assigned to each reference as it is used.
- Even if the author(s) is named, a number must still be used.
- The full reference must be listed in numerical order at the end of your essay in your bibliography.
- The original number assigned to the reference is used each time the reference is cited in the text, regardless of its position in the text.

The identifier (number) can be placed
outside the text punctuation to avoid disruption to the flow of the text or it can be placed inside the text punctuation [5,6].

Based on this system the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors has suggested uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical literature [7]. A few sample references are as follows:

**Articles in Journals**

1. **Standard journal article**
   (List all authors when six or less; when seven or more, list only first three and add *et al*).

2. **Organization as author**

3. **Both personal authors and an organization as author**

4. **No author given**
   21st century heart solution may have a sting in the tail. BMJ. 2002; 325(7357):184.

5. **Article not in English**

6. **Volume with supplement**

7. **Volume with part**

8. **No volume or issue**

9. **Pagination in roman numerals**

**Books and Other Monographs**

10. **Personal author(s)**

11. **Editor(s), compiler(s) as author**

12. **Author(s) and editor(s)**

13. **Organization(s) as author**

14. **Chapter in a book**

15. **Conference paper**

16. **Scientific or technical report**
17. Dissertation / Thesis  

18. Patent  

Other Published Material  
19. Newspaper article  

20. Audiovisual material  

21. Legal Material  
Public law:  
Code of Federal Regulations:  
Judgments:  
State of UP v. Madan Mohan. AIR 1989 SC. Cri LJ 1989;1519

22. Map  

23. Dictionary and similar references  

Unpublished Material  
24. In press / forthcoming  

Electronic Material  
25. CD-ROM  

26. Journal article on the Internet  

27. Monograph on the Internet  

28. Homepage/Web site  

29. Part of a homepage/Web site  

30. Database on the Internet  

SECONDARY REFERENCING  
In some cases you may wish to quote a piece of work that has been referred to in something you have read. This is called secondary referencing as you have not read the original piece of work. You are relying on the author you are reading to have given a fair interpretation of the contents of the original work. It is important to read the original work but this may prove difficult in some instances and it is accepted that it is not always possible. Nevertheless, if you still have to refer to it, your text
must make it clear that you have not read the original but are referring to it from a secondary source.

In your list of references at the end of your work you should only include the reference where you read about the original work. You cannot include details about the original study as you have not read it.

Thus: In your text, you should refer to the author whose work you have read, telling the reader that he or she cites another source, which you name. This can be done in several ways:

- **Bowling (1991) cites the work of Melzack and Torgerson (1971) who developed the McGill Pain questionnaire.** Or:
- **Melzack and Torgerson (1971, cited by Bowling 1991) developed the McGill Pain Questionnaire.** Or:
- **Bowling (1991, citing Melzack & Torgerson 1971) refers to the McGill Pain Questionnaire.**

It is important to be aware that some published works are secondary sources. These may be digests or reviews of published material which have utilized reports of studies to inform their own writing. Much of this material is very useful and brings a lot of research information together in a systematic way, but you should not think that you have read the original research if you have merely read about it in a review or digest.

**REFERENCES**