



Writing@CSU Writing Guide

Developing a Working Bibliography

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Main Page

Developing a working bibliography—a detailed list of books, articles and other sources relevant to your project—will keep you organized while gathering and sorting through potentially useful sources. Most importantly, a working bibliography is a tool; one that will change and grow as the focus of your research shifts and narrows. It has two purposes:

1. To keep a record of the sources you've already examined and those that you are going to examine.
2. To record the publishing details of each source you use or cite so that they can be properly referenced in a Works Cited or References List at the end of your document.

Many writers record individual sources on 3" X 5" or 4" X 6" inch note cards. Then, as the stack grows, they can be arranged, rearranged and compiled in any order of importance that suits the researcher's purpose.

Other writers use notebooks small enough to fit in a pocket. Still others use a word processing program or a computer database such as the [Writing@CSU Sources and Source Notes Tool](#).

Regardless of your method, the more care you take at the beginning of your project, the more time you'll save later when it's time to document your sources. Having the titles, authors, dates, page numbers and URLs at your fingertips will save you frantic trips back to the library or the Internet.

Note: You may record your working bibliography notes in any format you like; however, you'll save a lot of time using the format your instructor requires. When in doubt, ask what citation format you are expected to use.

Creating Book Source Notes

The following information will help you locate specific book sources in your library as well as in writing up your *Works Cited* or *References List* at the end of your document:

- The library call number
- The author's full name, last name first
- The book's title, including its subtitle if it has one, underlined, or in italics if you are using a computer
- The publication information: place, publisher, and year of publication

For each source note, you may want to include a brief annotation on your impression of the usefulness of the work , such as:

- GREAT INFO!
- Maybe a few gems here
- Probably not much use

Creating Periodical Source Notes

The following information will help you locate specific periodical and journal sources in your library as well as in writing up your *Works Cited* or *References List* at the end of your document:

- The author's full name.
- The title of the article, in quotation marks, followed by the name of the publication, underlined or in italics.
- For a scholarly journal, the volume number and, for certain journals, the issue number.
- The date of the issue. (Form varies with the type of journal or magazine.)
- The page numbers of the article. Including a + sign will indicate an article that appears on more than one page, but not on consecutive pages.

If your library classifies periodicals, the call number will be useful, however it is not required. For each source note you may also want to include a brief annotation on your impression of the usefulness of the work:

- Worth checking out in more detail
- Take a look at the works cited page
- Marginal at best

Creating Field Source Notes

The following information will help you keep track of field sources such as interviews, observations and surveys as well as in writing up your *Works Cited* or *References List* at the end of your document:

- The name of the person you interviewed or the setting you observed.
- A descriptive title, such as "Interview with Ellen Page."
- The date you conducted the interview or observation.

For each source note, you may also want to include a brief annotation on your impression of the usefulness of the work:

- The first half of this is perfect
- Best interview yet!
- A great source of info

Creating Electronic Source Notes

The following information will help you locate specific entries in electronic library databases and other Internet sources as well as in writing up your *Works Cited* or *References List* at the end of your document:

- The author's full name, if one is available (many Web pages do not list authors).
- The editor's full name, if indicated.
- The title of the database entry, Web page, Gopher page, or message.
- The name of the database, Web site, newsgroup or mailing list, or Gopher site in which you found the source.
- The Internet address - or URL - of sources you found on the Internet. URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator. (See the unit, "Using the World Wide Web," for details.)
- The date the source was created or last updated.
- The date you accessed the source.

For each source note, you may also want to include a brief annotation on your impression of the usefulness of the work:

- Use in the introduction
- Best I've seen yet
- Use only if other sources don't work out

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