
EDITORIAL

Scientific citations in the electronic age

The *European Journal of Surgical Oncology* aspires to embrace the New Electronic Age and the Internet in particular. The increasing intermarriage between the printed page and the electronic screen brings with it problems of citation. Many web sites offer valuable information and documents to download, with greater rapidity and efficiency than the printed page. Indeed, much information is now only available in electronic format, and many journals of reference are experimenting with the presentation of supplementary information in electronic form only.

Electronic data present problems for citation, being more ephemeral than the printed page and more able to be updated frequently, and because web sites may be modified, reorganized and readdressed. Indeed, we cannot be sure that a whole new form of electronic archiving will not emerge to supersede the current World Wide Web models.

No definitive reference system has yet emerged for electronic information. It is to the web itself that we must turn for guidance. Electronic citations must include the date of accession and sufficient information to track the computer server and the source. Moreover, the citation should be to the printed form of the data wherever possible. One UK Web scientific gateway offers a number of links to papers on this subject.

Li and Crane at the University of Vermont describe two bibliographic formats for citing electronic information on the Web,^{W2} the American Psychological Association (APA) embellished style and the Modern Language Association (MLA) Embellished Style, which may be downloaded or printed directly from the web site using a standard web browser such as Netscape Navigator or Internet Explorer. Examples are offered of the proposed formats for parts of works; journal articles; magazine articles; newspaper articles; discussion list messages and even personal electronic communications (E-mails). The format of such references is:

Author/editor: Title of electronic work: Medium (e.g. CDROM, Internet, WWW, computer file): Information supplier: protocol if available (e.g. http, ftp): Site/Path/File: Access Date.

Wainwright M. on the University of Cambridge server offers some minor modifications of this style.^{W3} Other papers can also be referenced through W1.

We invite our readers to use these formats where appropriate. More importantly at this stage in the electronic revolution, we encourage you to explore the electronic resources which are so radically and rapidly changing the way in which we seek out, access, record and store the treasure trove of human scientific knowledge.

Electronic references

W1. Anon: Author Guidelines: How to cite electronic resources: <http://www.graylab.ac.uk/cancerweb/library/html> accessed 15.06.97.

W2 Li X and Crane N: biblio-graphic formats for citing electronic information. <http://www.uvm.edu/~ncrane/estyles>. Updated 24 February 1997.

W3. Wainwright M. Citation style for internet sources. <http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/users/maw13/citation.htm>. 12 February 1996.

Printed references

Li X, Crane N. *Electronic Styles: A handbook for citing electronic information*. Information Today, 1996.

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