

## Citing Blogs as Reference Sources

This guidance addresses the use of blogs as reference sources in academic publishing, including:

- Quotation from blogs;
- Use of ideas that originated in a blog.

This page does not address best practice in research into blogs, the practice of blogging or bloggers themselves (i.e. the blog or blogger as the subject of research).

Although blogs are a long established medium, authors may be unaware of best practice conventions for their use in academic publishing. This page is designed to provide introductory guidance on this topic.

### *Should blogs be used as sources in academic publishing?*

There are a number of reasons why blogs may not be considered suitable sources in academic publishing:

- Blogs are typically not peer-reviewed.
- It may not be possible to confidently establish the authorship of blogs or verify their content.
- Blog text may not be fixed (i.e. the author may change the content of a particular blog page without warning).
- Blogs may not be permanently accessible and could be removed.

These characteristics are similarly found in many other forms of grey literature<sup>1</sup>, including newspaper articles (particularly online), industry research outputs, or technical reports. In all cases careful critical judgement is required before such sources should be used in academic publishing.

Despite these issues, blogs offer a significant and readily available corpus of information, ideas and opinions that could be of value to academic research. In some cases it may be possible to find an alternative source for the material provided by a particular blog, for example if the author has also published their ideas in a peer-reviewed and stable format or is basing their blog on existing research by others who have published in such a format.

However, some blogs will contain original research or ideas that are not published in an alternative form (or may include insights that are not articulated in the alternative publication). As such, there will be some cases in which a researcher will want to use a blog as a source in their academic research.

In such cases, researchers must, as with any other source, consider carefully whether the blog is of sufficient quality and reliability to be used confidently as a source in research.

If a decision is taken to use a blog as a source, it must be carried out in accordance with standard rules and expectations for referencing. The public and often informal nature of blogs does not remove the obligation on authors to acknowledge the source of the information or ideas they are using.

### *How should blogs be cited in academic publications?*

As with standard referencing, conventions for citing blogs vary between subjects, style manuals and journals. However, as with other online sources, references for material cited

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<sup>1</sup> 'Grey literature' is here defined as any research material that is either unpublished or is published outside standard academic publishing systems, often not being subject to peer-review.

from blogs should usually include the standard material required for a reference and particular information to address the digital nature of the source.

This will normally include:

- The author of the blog – this may be an individual (using a real name or screen name) but may also be a group such as a company or a title used by a group of authors who curate the blog.
- The title of the individual post.
- The title of the blog.
- The URL of the blogpost.

You may also be expected to include:

- A statement that the reference is from a blog post.
- The date on which you accessed the blog.

Sometimes a blog post will suggest a form of citation. In that case, it is recommended to follow the suggestion where possible.<sup>2</sup>

#### *Example references*

American Psychological Association (APA) Style<sup>3</sup>:

Parry, J. (2015, September 28). The Culture of Scientific Research: where next? [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://ukrio.org/the-culture-of-scientific-research-where-next/>

Harvard Style<sup>4</sup>:

Parry, J. (2015). The Culture of Scientific Research: where next?. *UK Research Integrity Office Blog*. Available from: <http://ukrio.org/the-culture-of-scientific-research-where-next/> [Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> September 2017]

#### *Further reading*

University of Cambridge guidance on referencing:  
<http://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/resources-and-support/referencing>

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the blog post by Paul Daly on the UK Constitutional Law Association's blog at <https://ukconstitutionallaw.org/2017/12/15/paul-daly-eu-law-in-the-uk-after-brexit-eu-nationals-rights-and-a-transitional-period/> : "(Suggested citation: P. Daly, 'EU Law in the UK after Brexit: EU Nationals' Rights and a Transitional Period', U.K. Const. L. Blog (15th Dec. 2017) (available at <https://ukconstitutionallaw.org/>))"

<sup>3</sup> McAdoo, T. (2016). How to cite a blog post in APA style, APA Style Blog. Available from: <http://blog.apastyle.org/apastyle/2016/04/how-to-cite-a-blog-post-in-apa-style.html> [Accessed 6th September 2017]

<sup>4</sup> For more detail see: Imperial College London, Harvard Style. Available from: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/library/learning-support/reference-management/harvard-style/> [Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> September 2017]