

Original Article

Citing Online Resources in Vancouver Style

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Received: September 22, 2006 Accepted: October 25, 2006

Abstract

Objective: To present guidelines for citing online resources in Vancouver style.

Methods: A review was carried out of the literature relating to citing online resources in Vancouver style using Yahoo and Google search engines.

Results: The Vancouver style of references citation is used primarily for publication in biomedical research. Citation of books, journals, reports, proceedings of seminars/meetings, article in newspapers have specific format.

Conclusion: The basic rules of citing online resources do not differ markedly than for print resources. The information about type of medium, date of update/revision, date of citation, Uniform Resource Locator (URL) from which available and system requirements are added while citing online resources. (Rawal Med J 2006;32:14-17)

Keywords: Vancouver style, citing online resources, medical writing, medical research.

INTRODUCTION

Vancouver style is used primarily for publication in biomedical research. It was named first in a meeting of editors of medical journals in Vancouver, Canada in 1978.¹ This was further developed by the National Library of Medicine and was adopted by International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) as part of their “uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals”.² As more biomedical information becomes available online, some guidelines of citation formats are necessary in order to provide accurate references to authorship.³ The aim of this study was to present guidelines along with examples for citing Internet resources in Vancouver style.

METHODS

A review was carried out of the literature related to guidelines given by different universities/institutions and organizations for citing online resources in Vancouver style. The instructions given in different Pakistani and foreign medical journals for authors were reviewed. Yahoo and Google search engines were used to search the related literature. The references of selected sample of local and foreign medical journals were also studied.

RESULTS

Citation within the Text: Vancouver style uses a notation method of referencing without any distinction between print and online references when referring to a source of information within the text of a document. Arabic numerals in superscript format e.g. ⁶ or enclosed by round bracket e.g. (6) or square brackets e.g. [6] are used to indicate references. The format of identification of references within the text of article/thesis may vary according to the preferred style of the journal/institution. For example Rawal

Medical Journal uses superscript format, Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal (PAFMJ) uses square bracket format and American Journal of Physiology uses round bracket format. The references in final bibliography are enlisted in the numeric order as they are quoted in the text. This applies to references in text, tables and figures. Once a source has been cited, the same number is used in all subsequent references, regardless of its subsequent position in the text. The Vancouver system assigns a number to each reference as it is cited. A number must be used even if the author named is natural part of sentence. When multiple references are cited at a given place in the text, hyphen is used to join the first and last numbers that are inclusive. Commas (without space) are used to separate non-inclusive numbers in a multiple citation e.g. [1-5,7,12].

Citing online Monographs (Books): The standard format in order of the information of a citation, with punctuation is as under. 1st Author's last name Initial(s), 2nd Author's last name Initial(s), 3rd Author's last name Initial(s), 4th Author's last name Initial(s), 5th Author's last name Initial(s), 6th Author's last name Initial(s), et al. Title: subtitle [book online]. Edition. Place of publication: Publisher; year [cited year month day]. Pages. (Series; no). Available from: URL Web address system requirements. For example: Smolinski MS, Hamburg MA, Lederberg J. Microbial threats to health: emergence. Detection, and response [book online]. Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences; 2003 [cited 2006 Jul 6]. P. 313-30. Available from:URL.<http://www.nap.edu/books/030908864X/html/>. With More than six Authors, et al is added.

Monographic series: Ashery RS, Robertson EB, Kumpfer KL. Drug abuse prevention through family Interventions [book online]. Rockville, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse; 1998 [cited 2006 Jul 7]. p. 197- 200. (NIDA research monograph; no. 177).

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Encyclopedias: Encyclopedia Britannica [online]. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc; 2006 [cited 2006 Jul 10]. Available from: <http://www.britannica.com/>.

Citing online Serials (journals): The standard format for citing a serial or journals in order of the information of a citation, with punctuation is as under. 1st Author's last name Initial(s), 2nd Author's last name Initial(s), 3rd Author's last name Initial(s), 4th Author's last name Initial(s), 5th Author's last name Initial(s), 6th Author's last name Initial(s), et

al. Title: subtitle. Title of journal (abbreviated) [serial online]. Year month day [cited year month day]; volume (number): page from – page to. Available from: URL. Web address system requirements.

For Less than seven authors: Goldwin JW, Benjamin I. Internet –based medical information: time to take charge. Ann Intern Med [serial online]. 1995 Jul [cited 2006 May 31]; 123(2): 152-3. Available from: URL <http://annals.org/cgi/content/full/123/2/152>. For more than six authors, et al is added after six authors.

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E-mail (Discussion list): Surname of Sender Initials. Subject of message [discussion list online]. Year first three letters of month day [cited year first three letters of month day].

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Personal electronic communications (E-mail): Sender (Sender's E-mail address). Subject of message. Recipient (Recipients E-mail address) Year month day [cited year month day]. For example: Ullah M. (midrar2000@yahoo.com). Re: Online biomedical Pakistani medical journals. Haroon M (haroon2002@yahoo.com) 2006 Jul 10 [cited 2006 Jul 10].

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Online Image (example): Gopalakrishnakone. Root of thorax-Abdomen (Girl of 10 yr) fig 11[image online] Singapore: National University of Singapore; 1997 [cited 2006 Jul 12]. Available from: <http://www.med.nus.edu.sg/ant/e-museum/docs/t11.html>.

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DISCUSSION

During study of references of articles published in Pakistani medical journals, it is observed that the citation style of most of online resources enlisted is frequently inconsistent, incomplete, and is not according to Vancouver style.⁴ The guidelines for citing online resources are provided on the web sites of different institutions and medical journals. The bodies giving the most comprehensive recommendations, which were

reviewed for compilation of these guidelines in this study include International Standard Organization,⁵ the “National Library of Medicine⁶ and National Information Standards Organization (NISO).⁷ The information about type of medium, date of update/revision, date of citation, uniform resource locator (URL) from which available and system requirement are added while citing online resources. This information is necessary for the readers to locate the citation in the future and online resources may also be vanished/ removed or they may change the locations.⁸ In conclusion, the basic rules of citing online resources do not differ markedly than for print resources. These guidelines will be helpful for medical writers while citing online resources in their publications. However, authors need to study the specific instructions to authors published by the journals.

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