

Research Matters

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Abstract

It has now become accepted practice within academic writing to follow a standardised format for presenting articles for publication. The plethora of differing styles of teaching and presenting English leads many to present articles to journal editors in a variety of forms. This article is designed to offer a standard format based on the Harvard Referencing System for all future authors to follow.

This article is abstracted from the publication, 'research Handbook – A Practical Guide', 'Lloyd (2001). Although the book itself goes into much greater detail on research topic', analysis, layout, etc., etc., I believe it is timely to present an abstract as a brief précis to assist all budding writers, researchers and presenters.

I will begin by presenting an extract from an MBA assignment that was rejected by the supervisor and ask you, the reader to look at it carefully. I have numbered each line to make it easier to identify. Read it once, note any errors, and then look at my comments, which mirror that of the supervisor as to what is wrong with the extract.

MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE AND INNOVATION

1. 'The graduates who have passed out from these universities were not absorbed to the job market.
2. Since their studies were not industry oriented. As there was no demand for our graduates in the job.
3. Market, a committee was appointed to look into this problem, the appointed committee came out.
4. With a solution. According to the survey carried out by the committee, comprising eight members,
5. they have found that the programs taught at the traditional universities were industry oriented. We

6. appointed an academic committee comprising the hotel managers, travel agents, tour operators and
7. airline managers including the academic staff. As per the request made by the academic committee
8. detailed questionnaires were sent to the industry about the Degree Programs in Travel and
9. Hospitality Management and for them to recommend the subjects which are important to their
10. operation. Therefore the U.G.C. (University Grants Commission) appointed a committee
11. comprising the industry owners, business entrepreneurs, hotel owners and tour operators to study
12. on this issue and to provide a report'.

Okay, that was exactly how part of the assignment was written and presented. Now, check out my comments to see if you correctly identified all of the errors.

So, how many errors did you spot? Let me start by looking first at the general layout. This seems OK although the paragraph would have benefited from a spell and grammar check, which is incorporated into MSWord under; 'Tools'. Next, line 2. The writer started 'As there was no demand for our graduates', how does the writer know this, what evidence is there, is this merely speculation? If you make statements like this, you must back it up with evidence and reference the evidence! Line 3 says, 'a committee was appointed to look into this problem'. What problem? What committee? Who appointed the committee? How many members? Who are they? What are their terms of reference? What is their time scale? When do they have to report? Lines 3/4, the appointed committee came out with a solution. What committee, etc.? What solution? Line 4, according to the survey carried out by the committee comprising eight members. What survey? What committee? Who are the eight members? Where are they from? Who do they represent? Line 5, they have found that the programs taught at the traditional universities were industry oriented. What programs? What is a 'traditional university'? What does 'industry oriented' mean? Line 6, we appointed an academic committee. Who did? What was the composition of the committee? Terms of reference, etc.? Lines 6/7, comprising the hotel managers, travel agents, tour operators and airline managers including the academic staff. Where were they from? What tour operators? What airline? What academic staff? Lines 7/8 As per the request made by the academic committee detailed questionnaires were sent to the industry about the Degree programs. What request? What questionnaires? What industry? What degree programs? Lines 9/10, for them to recommend the subjects that are important to their operation. What subjects? What operation? Line 10, Therefore the U.G.C. (University Grants Commission). Spelling and layout wrong! Lines 11/12, 'study on this issue and to provide a report'. What issue? What report? When? I hope that your list of queries was as complete as mine? Look at each numbered line and see where I have typed in bold. This is the comment and following this, my own questions regarding the comment. There are very many errors in the above extract as you can see; many questions that need answering. For example, look at line 4. If statements such as this are made, you must quantify them with supporting evidence. Include source material either as footnotes or as a reference list at the

end of the document in alphabetical order. Look at line number 10. This is written incorrectly and not in the proper order.

Now, let me try to re-write this extract for you in a clearer way. As I don't have access to the information such as reports, etc., I shall say that they are attached as an appendix for the sake of clarity. You may not entirely agree with the way I have re-written the article, but I think it is an improvement on the previous one.

MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE AND INNOVATION

'The graduates who have passed out from the universities mentioned above, were not readily absorbed into the job market since their studies did not appear to be industry oriented. As there appeared to be little opportunity for our graduates in the job market, a committee was appointed to look into this problem. The committee was appointed by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and comprised eight members drawn from a wide cross-section of interested parties in the country (see appendix 1 for the committee structure, terms of reference and reporting time-scales). The committee carried out a survey into graduate employment in the country and their conclusions are summarised in appendix 2. The survey comprised a detailed questionnaire and it was agreed that this should be sent to a number of industries to gauge their response regarding future undergraduate courses. A list of those industries is shown in appendix 3 and a copy of the questionnaire is shown in appendix 4.

The main conclusion drawn from the committee report was that universities are not teaching courses aligned to particular industries. For example, the undergraduate degree program in hospitality management and tourism taught at Rajarata university had a very small industry oriented module in hotel management barely sufficient to give students more than a passing reference to the subject (see appendix 5). Therefore, the UGC established a working party comprising representatives from Aitken Spence Hotel, Sri Lankan Airlines, Hayley's Group and Sampath Bank. This group's terms of reference were 'to investigate the content and structure of undergraduate programs such as hospitality management and to make recommendation for change bases on industry requirements'. The group were to report within six months of the given start date.

Now, does this flow better than the previous attempt? Another point to mention here was the way in which the reference section was presented. Again, the supervisor was critical of the particular style adopted. It is common now in books, journal and research papers to provide a list of reference using the universally accepted 'Harvard Referencing System'. This should be adopted using the examples that follow and you should get into the habit of using it. I have provided a list of the main points and they are as follows:

- Author (s) surname and initials
- Date of publication (in brackets)
- Title of book or article
- Page number(s)
- Publisher
- Place of publication

E.g. Robinson, A. B. (1978) ; 'Schools and Social Work' , pps. 2-18, John Wiley, London.

Note the layout of the above example of a reference taken from a book. The title of the book is shown in 'quotation marks'. A comma and full stop separate the authors name and initials respectively. The date of publication is shown in brackets () and the page numbers are abbreviated as pps. The publishers name then appears followed lastly by the place of publication. This is the correct way of recording the reference work from a book.

If the reference source is from two authors, the following is used:

Dunn, A. S. and Lloyed, G.C.(1994) 'Suggestion Schemes: The Management Tool for the 90's', MBA Publishing, Wetherby.

From more than two authors, the spacing and Punctuation are as follows:

In the body of the report itself: Saunders et. al. (1997). The use of the italicized et. al., which is a Latin expression meaning 'and other', obviates the need to include lengthy lists of authors. However, within the reference section the full list of authors should be shown as:

Saunders, M.N.K, Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (1997) 'Research Methods for Business Students', Pitman, London.

Again, notice the way in which the full stop and comma is used. In the above example, where there are more than two authors, the comma () and full stop () are used as shown. However, when there are only two authors such as that shown below, then you omit the comma () between the first and second authors.

If the reference source is a chapter contained within a book, the correct form is as follows:

Healey, M.J. and Robinson, M.B.(1994) 'Interviewing Techniques in Business and Management Research', in Wass, V. J. and Wells, P.E.(eds.) 'Principles and Practice in Business and Management', Dartmouth, Aldershot. Again, notice the way in which the punctuation has been used and the inclusion of (eds.) in italics to denote who the editors of the publication are. If the reference source is taken from a journal, then the same rules shown above apply with the exception of the following:

Lloyd, G.C.(1999) 'stuff the suggestions box', Total Quality Mangement, Vol.10, No. 6, pps.869-875.

Notice that the title of the publications is italicized; all other information will be the same as that mentioned previously.

To differentiate between publication by the same author in the same year use a, b, c etc.: (Forster 1991a) making sure this is consistent throughout the research project and corresponds with the bibliography. The above system of referencing is known as the 'The Harvard System'.

Reference: that do not fall easily into this format should be given in a way as closely conforming to the format as possible. If diagrams, graphs, charts etc. are used in the body of the report that are taken from a publication or some other source and are not the writer's unique work, then the source should be given underneath the diagram. The use of Latin abbreviations is commonplace throughout most works and the most popular are given below.

Abbreviation	Explanation
Op. cit. (opera citato)	meaning in the work cited. This refers to a work previously referenced and so you must give the author and date and if necessary the page number.
Loc.cit. (loco citato)	meaning in the place cited. This refers to the same page of a work previously referenced and so you must give the author and date
Lbid. (ibidem)	meaning the same work given immediately before. This refers to the work referenced immediately before and replaces all details of the previous reference other than a page number if necessary.

Internet (web-based) searches are becoming increasingly used for research and therefore it is important that the correct referencing is used if information sources from this particular medium are incorporated into the report. Should a reference be obtained from the Internet, the address line can be cut and paste directly into a document which can save considerable time and effort. However, be sure to give the appropriate credit to the author or web-site when doing this.

Now in conclusion, one of the most important points to remember is to try and develop a 'research mentality'. This will set you apart from others who tend to become somewhat sloppy in their approach, especially when searching for a particular reference. What I mean by this is best illustrated by the following example. The only reference given as you can see in the paragraph shown below was Caldwell (1944). So, how do we find the publication, title, publisher, etc., with so little information to go on?

Another early advocate of suggestion schemes was Alexander Hamilton. Whilst serving as Secretary of the Treasury under George Washington, Hamilton asked his officers to 'note and communicate the merits/deficits of the Revenue System and to point out methods of improving them', Caldwell (1944).

First, the date (1944) means that the book or journal is probably no longer in print so it will not appear in current catalogues. But we are given number of clues. The reference refers to the 'Revenue System' and the first president of the USA, George Washington. Another clue is the secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton. So, let us first carry out an Internet search. I usually use one of the excellent 'search engines' such as www.google.com. I entered a string search using the following words:

Hamilton, Washington, Revenue, Improvements, Caldwell.

The search revealed a staggering 64,000 pages! The first few entries pointed to something called the 'Alexander Hamilton Institute'. Further searches seemed to point to this as a primary focus for papers, reports, etc. there was an information 'click box' for enquiries, so using this I entered my enquiry details. Some two days later I received a reply, saying that although they were called the 'Alexander Hamilton Institute', they did not keep any historical papers relating to my line of enquiry.

So, how to broaden the search? Well, the next clue was that this reference [Caldwell]

Was clearly an American publication judging by the fact that 'Washington', 'Revenue System', 'Washington' and 'Hamilton' all appeared in the article. One of the most comprehensive collections of books, papers and manuscripts in the world is held in the Library of Congress in Washington DC. There is an on-line category listing and searches using key words result in a fast response. Again, using the same string search as that shown above, I tried again, but this time I merely entered the word 'Caldwell' - the name of the author.

The search revealed 4759 entries under this name. Well, there is no short cut in research, so I began a laborious and time-consuming search scanning each page of records, one by one. Fortunately the site downloads each page quickly and each entry gives the author and date of publication. After something approaching two hours of searching, *Eureka*, there it was! There were, however, several entries listed by Caldwell, L.K. Showing different dates. But eventually through patient observation, I found the correct reference:

Caldwell, L.K. (1944) 'The Administrative Theories of Hamilton and Jefferson', University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

I am sure you feel that this was a great deal of work for one reference, but if you are going to do research remember that there is only one way of doing it, and that is properly! The watchword every time is 'Vigilance' Don't be swayed by sloppiness, aim to get it right every time.

I was once reading a journal and was interested in an article shown in the reference section that I wanted to obtain. Using an on-line catalogue connected to a university database, I entered the details. No such reference was listed. So the only way to track it down was to contact the author directly. I sent a fax requesting a copy of the article to a university in New York. The author himself replied two days later saying that he was not the one who wrote that particular paper and could not provide any details about it, in fact he was completely mystified as to why he had been accredited with the reference in the first place! So you see, even top journal sometimes get it wrong! Again, the moral of the story is, do your research with extreme care.

Armed with all this information, your writing should now take on a more pleasant and flowing style. Your searches will become ever more robust and like the good researcher you are going to become, you can be proud of the end result. Try to

get into the habit of using the grammar/spelling check when writing and save your work frequently on both hard and floppy drives.

Just one last tip when writing a project for a degree or a dissertation. Try to find out at least one of your supervisors' names and see what they have published. If you can, refer to their work in your own research, they will like that! What you want people to say after seeing and reading your work is what one research supervisor once said to me, 'It was a good read'.

Good Luck!

References

Lloyd, G.C. (2002) 'Research Handbook –A Practical Guide', Rajarata University.