



Kate L. Turabian: A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers

9th Edition, Revised by Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, William T. FitzGerald, and the University of Chicago Editorial Staff

University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Illinois, 2017; 462 pages (paperback) \$18.00; ISBN: 9780226430577)

Thomas R. Claire^{1,2}

Published online: 27 July 2018

© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2018

There has never been a better time or greater need for people to revisit a long-time classic devoted to the benefits of research. From every quarter today, everyone hears such catchphrases as “fake news” and “alternative facts.” Oxymoronic explanations aside, for anyone thinking about research, a double problem immediately arises: How do you ensure that your own news sources are solid while at the same time not only disproving other points of view, which might be quite obviously opinions and nothing more, while also getting the word home to disbelievers that yes, you have in fact checked the facts and that what you report is true?

Before you read further, let me underscore that the adjective “true” and the noun “truth” are absolutes, meaning that grammatically as well as empirically “true” can take neither a comparative nor a superlative form. Think about it for a moment, please: Can something be “truer” than something else? In the “truest” sense of the word, would a “true lie” be possible? Of course not. Either something is true or it is not. Period. It’s like “unique”: Either something is unique or it is not; nothing can be “more unique” or “most unique” (or in today’s muddled parlance, “very unique”).

So a reissue of *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* (fondly known simply as “Turabian”), now in its ninth edition from the University of Chicago Press, makes a welcome entrance onto a confused and intellectually challenged scene. And a timely one at that, given the seemingly random though often politically driven effort to contort honest reportage and skew if not skewer attempts to speak truth today, especially

✉ Thomas R. Claire

¹ Newtown, CT, USA

² New York, USA

given the outsize weight that social media have assumed not only in directing but also in focusing personal attention and consciousness.

Part I of *Turabian*, *Research and Writing*, opens with simple but well-formulated expositions of what research constitutes and how one goes about pursuing it. As with the straightforward content of every *Chicago Guide to Writing, Editing and Publishing* (of which this volume is a part), the editors extend every opportunity for readers to follow their lead into a realm of ideology bound only by imagination and practicality. Bottom line: There is applied research and there is pure research, but no matter what, in the spirit of research there is also something called the open mind. Researching entails collaboration and the realization that knowledge unfolds with effort. It takes time and insight and elbow grease to address thorny research issues. The step-by-step procedures and samples that the Chicago editors offer are priceless.

Of equal note, the editors go to great lengths to underscore that research entails conversation and collaboration. The best research builds on previously established work performed in tried-and-true fashion and readily submits itself to vetting to test itself and its proposals and hypotheses openly in the marketplace of shared and mutual interest. For no intellectual endeavor exists in a vacuum, and one of honest research's prime goals is the betterment of thought and understanding. As one learns the craft of research, he or she learns which sources can be trusted and how to winnow out those that cannot. If this book were required reading, it would probably merit such status based simply on its ability to show readers and wannabe researchers exactly that: how to evaluate sources for reliability. (Please excuse me for suggesting that such knowledge—knowing how to differentiate solid reportage [especially online] from suspect sources—would go a long way toward resetting awareness of social media fiascoes that currently haunt social endeavors from news reportage to voting scams. If more people knew how to discern “real” from “faux” news, propaganda machines would face existential threats that would likely show them the door. But I digress.)

Part II of the ninth edition of *Turabian* constitutes a deeply sourced introduction and examination of source citation: How do researchers present their evidence? Which practices have earned the highest marks for clarity and continuity and which have cleared the highest bars of acceptance among researchers as a group? This section of *Turabian* speaks to the nuts and bolts of evidence presentation and as such might try the patience of the casual reader. However, for anyone who hopes to do more than stick a toe in the university or collegiate pool of intellectual ideas and thought, it is required reading. For those considering research professionally, it is mandatory. Thankfully, the editors have made the task a not unpleasant one. Reading this section takes no longer than a couple of hours and will prove a ready source of reference for later endeavors. Keep your highlighter in hand and if you use them (as I do), your Post-it notes handy.

Part III—*Style*—recapitulates the Chicago University Press's long-recognized “rules” for spelling, punctuation, and general grammar (and more). It is by no means out of place here and is so clearly expressed that it would be well worthwhile to read it wherever one might find it. Chicago has, however, presented it in fuller form elsewhere (for example, in Bryan A. Garner's *The Chicago Guide to Grammar, Usage, and Punctuation*, previously reviewed here, and in *The Chicago Manual of Style*

[currently in its seventeenth edition]). That said, this reviewer is happy to report that *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*' content, presentation, and intent are so on target that even a minor peccadillo ought to be swept under the proverbial carpet. But what is up with the chapter heading "Polish It Up"? Was Dr. Pleonasm absent from the dissecting room the day that the editors addressed that topic? Perhaps the kind doctor will apply the requisite secateurs to that unnecessary "up" in future editions...

But all that is small potatoes. Without doubt, for anyone interested in learning about research—what it is, where one goes to pursue it, how to do it, what it entails and means, why it is important (now more so than ever before)—*A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers* is the place to begin. It will likely show people new to the field a way forward and offer experienced researchers the means to test established modes of operation. This book will not fail you, today or tomorrow, at home or in the library. Look for it at a bookstore near you or online.