National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP)

General Writing Guidelines

In writing essays for NDNP:

- Follow the general guidelines for names and terms set forth in *Chicago* 7.1-161.
- The creation of each text should be guided by two major needs:
- for authoritative information that is essential but concise
- for maximum keyword searching
- Newspaper titles, including location, should be rendered in italics (e.g.: *Washington Evening Times*, not "Washington Evening Times" or Washington *Evening Times*).
- Names of newspapers. When newspapers are mentioned in text, an initial *the*, even if part of the official title, is **lowercased (unless it begins a sentence) and not italicized** see *Chicago* 8.180. When the title of a newspaper first appears in the text, a **city name, even if not part of the name of an American newspaper, should be added, and italicized along with the official title**; *Chicago* 17.195. The *Lawrenceburg It*, or the *Lawrenceburg* (KY) *It*.
- When a newspaper other than the main subject of the scope note is mentioned for the first time, the reference should be followed immediately by the most appropriate LCCN, in the following format: [LCCN: sn12344444].
- Use modifiers wherever necessary to clarify words and terms that may have multiple or ambiguous meanings.
- Express words and terms in ways that the general user can understand.
- In general, spell out acronyms the first time they are used within a document.

Abbreviations

- Abbreviations should be kept out of running text.
- General abbreviations, such as *etc.*, *e.g.*, and *i.e.* are preferably confined to parenthetical references.
- Purely scholarly abbreviations such as *ibid., cf.,* and *s.v.* are preferably used only in notes and other forms of scholarly apparatus.

Chicago 14.1-57 contains a comprehensive overview of all uses of abbreviations. *Webster's Tenth Collegiate Dictionary* and the *American Heritage Dictionary* are also excellent resources for abbreviations from all fields.

Abbreviations in NDNP Documents. Instances where abbreviations are most likely to appear include:

Acronyms (*Chicago* 14.15):

- Names of agencies and organizations may be abbreviated after one spelled-out use (e.g., Historic American Buildings Survey [HABS]).
- If the acronym is widely pronounced as though it were a word, the article is determined by the pronunciation of the word (e.g., an NDNP title).

Names and Titles (*Chicago* 14.4-14):

- Abbreviations should not be used in personal names unless they appear thus in signatures (e.g., Benj. Franklin) or in quoted text.
- Civil or military titles used with the surname alone should be spelled out (e.g., General Washington); with full names, the titles may be abbreviated (e.g., Sen. Howard M. Metzenbaum). See *Chicago* 14.5.
- Avoid the use of such titles as Mr., Ms., Dr., etc. When used, always abbreviate, Mr., Mrs., Messrs., Ms., M., MM., Mme, Mlle, and Dr.

Personal names with *Saint* (*Chicago* 14.16) are usually spelled out in text (e.g., Saint Patrick).

Names of Places and States (*Chicago* 14.17):

- The names of states, territories, and possessions of the United States should always be given in full when standing alone. When they follow the name of a city or some other geographical term, they should be spelled out. .

Notes

No endnotes or footnotes. Incorporate things you might want to footnote into the text.

Numbers

Guidelines for spelling out numbers:

- As a rule, **write out only the numbers one through nine**. Use **digits from 10 on** and for centuries (the **21st century**).
- Combine digits and words for larger quantities (2 million; 60 billion).
- Spell out numbers when used approximately: "About a hundred soldiers were killed."
- Spell out a number used as the first word of a sentence (*Chicago* 8.9-10).

Consistency: When small and large numbers occur together in a group, set them all in numerals for consistency. When listing sets of numbers, *Chicago* 8.8 advises that "if you

must use numerals for one of the numbers in a given category, then for consistency's sake use numerals for them all."

> There are 25 photographs in the first box, 56 in the second box, and 117 in the third box, making a total of 198 photographs in the three boxes.

Quantities (*Chicago* 8.3-31):

- Units of measurement (*Chicago* 8.15) in running text should be spelled out. When many units of measurement appear together in text, use numerals with abbreviations (e.g., 9 g, 10 mph).
- Express round numbers above one million in numerals and words (e.g., 20 million).
- For percentages (*Chicago* 8.17-18), use numerals and spell "percent" (e.g., 20 percent).
- Use commas in four-digit numbers (e.g., 4,508) except where the number is a page number (e.g., 1409).

Fractions (*Chicago* 8.14) are hyphenated as either adjectives or nouns (e.g., a two-thirds majority, two-thirds of those present). For decimal fractions (*Chicago* 8.17), use numerals (e.g., 3.14, 0.02).
Use numerals for numbered items such as parts of a book (*Chicago* 8.32) (e.g., chapter 5, part 2, page 35, volume 4).

Dates

Guidelines for spelling out numbers: (*Chicago* 8.33-46)

The year alone (*Chicago* 8.34) should be expressed in numerals, unless it is at the beginning of a sentence (*Chicago* 8.9). Era designations (*Chicago* 8.41) should be given in capitals, with the following style for periods and spacing: A.D. 1800, 75 B.C.

The day of the month (*Chicago* 8.36) in running text, notes, and bibliographies is written in the sequence month-day-year, with the year set off by commas:

> October 6, 1966

> On October 6, 1966, Archi Cianfrocco was born in Rome, New York.

Write the day of the month as a cardinal number (e.g., April 18, *not* April 18th).

Month and year (*Chicago* 8.39) are written in the sequence month-year with no internal punctuation (e.g., April 1993).

Centuries and decades (*Chicago* 8.40) should be spelled out in lowercase letters (e.g. ninth century, twentieth century). Spell out decades (the sixties, the seventies) or if the decade is identified by the century, write them as plural numerals (1920s, 1880s). Compound adjectives should be hyphenated (e.g., a twentieth-century school of thought).

Time of day (*Chicago* 8.47) normally should be spelled out in text (e.g., quarter of four, noon, seven o'clock), but for emphasis write time in numerals, capitalizing A.M. and P.M. (2:30 P.M., 7:30 A.M.)

Form of Inclusive Numbers

Guidelines for form of inclusive numbers (*Chicago* 8.68-73):
Inclusive numbers: Follow this model, which appears in *Chicago* 8.69:

FIRST NUMBER	SECOND NUMBER	EXAMPLES
Less than 100	Use all digits	3-10, 71-72, 96-117
100 or multiple of 100	Use all digits	100-104, 600-613, 1100-1123
101 through 109 (in multiples of 100)	Use changed part only, omitting unneeded zeros	107-8, 505-17, 1002-6
110 through 199 (in multiples of 100)	Use two digits, or more if needed	321-25, 415-532, 1536-38, 1496-504, 14325-28, 11564-78, 13792-803

Separating numbers with dashes (*Chicago* 8.68): Always write "167-72," never "from 167-72." As the dash implies 'from' and 'to,' it is redundant to use the words as well as the dash. Without the dash, however, write "from 167 to 172."

Inclusive years (*Chicago* 8.71):
When referring to years within the same century but after the first year of that century, use this style:

- the war of 1914-18
- 1968-72
- the years 1701-4
- 1701-68

When referring to different centuries or a time span when the century changes, repeat all the digits:

- the years 1597-1601
- the winter of 1900-1901
- fiscal year 2000-2001

Titles (*Chicago* 8.72):
When inclusive years occur in titles, express all the digits:

> *The Coolidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929.*

If, however, the title of a published work contains abbreviated inclusive dates, the abbreviation should be retained.

Lifespans:
When displaying the span of an individual's life, express all the digits:

- George Washington (1732-1799)
- Calvin J. Coolidge (1872-1933)

Punctuation

This section refers only to punctuation in running text as described in *Chicago* 5.1-137 and 10.1-86.
Punctuation should be used to make the author's meaning clear, promote ease of reading, and contribute to the author's style. The trend in contemporary writing is to punctuate only when necessary to prevent misreading of text (*Chicago* 5.1-2).
Writers should consult *Chicago* for guidance in specific instances, but the following are reminders for special situations:

Typography: For italicized text appearing in a sentence that is otherwise in Roman characters see guidelines in *Chicago* 5.4-6.

Quotation marks: See *Chicago* (5.11-13, 5.20, 5.28, 5.86-87, 5.96, 5.104) for guidance on using quotation marks with periods, commas, semi-colons, question marks, and exclamation points. **In almost all cases periods and commas are placed inside quotation marks**, semi-colons outside, and question marks and exclamation points inside or outside depending on the intent of the punctuation.

Commas in a series (*Chicago* 5.57-61)**:**

- Separate any list of three or more elements in a series with commas. If a conjunction joins the last two elements in the series, a comma is used before the conjunction: We have a choice of copper, silver, or gold.

- When the elements in a series are simple and all joined by conjunctions, no commas should be used:

  > It is not known if the letter was written by Hamilton or Burr or someone else.

- When the elements in a series are long and complex, or involve internal punctuation, they should all be separated by semicolons (*Chicago* 5.94).

Other uses and rules for commas are described in *Chicago* 5.30-65.

Em dashes (*Chicago* 5.105-19): Use two hyphens to indicate an em dash in running text:

> Because the data had not yet been completely analyzed--the reason for this will be discussed later--the publication of the report was delayed.

> Warning: certain word-processing programs have default settings that automatically convert two hyphens to something else. WordPerfect, for example, converts two hyphens to its own format of em dash, which is later lost when the WP document is converted to ASCII for HTML markup. This default setting can be turned off.

Ellipsis points (*Chicago* 10.48-63):

- When appearing in the middle of a sentence, these should be written as . . . (that is, space dot space dot space dot):

  > e.g., When I was four years old . . . I was brought from Boston to New York.

- At the end of a sentence, an ellipsis should be written as . . . . (that is, space dot space dot space dot space dot space):

  > e.g., When I was four years old . . . I was brought to New York. My first sight of the Big Apple is forever imprinted on my memory . . . .

  > Warning: certain word-processing programs have default settings that automatically convert . . . (three periods) to something else. WordPerfect, for example, converts . . . to its own format of ellipsis points, which is later lost when the WP document is converted to ASCII for HTML markup. This default setting can be turned off.

Hyphens: Correct hyphenation is one of the trickiest and most time-consuming tasks a writer or editor faces. As the language changes, conventions of hyphenation change with it. The earlier trend of stately progression from open compound to hyphenated word to closed compound has shifted toward a more rapid progression from open compound to closed compound, often skipping the hyphenated stage altogether. Writers should consult *Chicago* (6.32-6.42 and especially table 6.1), and, as *Chicago* recommends, a good dictionary.

- NDNP house style makes one exception to the guides given in *Chicago*. In the case of compound proper nouns, such as "French Canadian" or "African American," the compound should be unhyphenated when used as a noun, but if it is used as an adjective before another noun it should be hyphenated, as in "French-Canadian folk songs" or "African-American newspapers."

General Guidelines for Spelling

Guidelines for NDNP spelling style may be summarized as follows:

- Follow the guidelines for spelling and distinctive treatment of words outlined in *Chicago* 6.1-92. Note that table 6.1 in *Chicago* offers specific guidance on rules for spelling of compound words and words with prefixes and suffixes. NDNP and other staff writing documents for the Web should become thoroughly familiar with its content.
- The NDNP prefers that spellings be checked against *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (10th Edition), but will also accept the *American Heritage Dictionary* and the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*. Use one dictionary consistently with any set of documents.
- The NDNP accepts spellings peculiar to certain disciplines (e.g., some specialists in North American studies prefer "archeology" rather than the more commonly found "archaeology").
- Where the dictionary offers two acceptable spellings for the same word (e.g., focused, focussed), choose the first and use that spelling consistently throughout a single set of framework documents.