Seventh Edition

Writing the Research Paper

A Handbook

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Preface

When *Writing the Research Paper: A Handbook* was first published twenty-eight years ago, the first shot had not been fired in the computer revolution, and all researchers were still yoked to the typewriter where the slightest mistake in a line had to be paid for in the drudgery of retyping an entire page. Computers had not become as plentiful as toasters, and the Internet was no more than one or two sparse bulletin boards as primitive as the old-fashioned telegraph. Online sources were unknown, and the idea of communicating with the use of color graphics in a research paper was nothing more than a dream.

From the start, our intention was to make this book as "unbooklike" as possible. No one who has to write a research paper wants to waste time by studying the ins and outs of documentation or the protocols of research. When we ourselves were harassed students, snowed under by a blizzard of work, we learned only those research conventions we needed to write the paper. If we needed to know, for example, how to cite an article from a journal paginated anew in every issue, we wanted to learn this without having to read ten pages of a manual. Six editions have since passed with the focus of this book remaining unchanged.

This is a book not meant to be read, but merely consulted. Everything the student researcher needs to know is laid out in stand-alone sections, paragraphs, and servings. One can nibble tidbits of knowledge from this smorgasbord without eating the whole meal. There is no necessary continuation running between the chapters except a common focus on the research paper. Every unit informs separately without relying on information found elsewhere. This is more a dictionary, in sum, than a discursive book.

The seventh edition atomizes even further everything the student needs to know about research paper writing. Here are the highlights of what we have done:

- This edition now treats in separate chapters the documentation styles of the MLA, APA, and CMS. We have done away with any explanation intended to show the differences between these styles. A student writing a paper using the MLA style does not need to know what APA or CMS requires any more than a backyard gardener growing tomatoes needs to know how crops are rotated in Morocco. Such gratuitous information will only confuse, not enlighten.
- We have added a new chapter, Chapter 8, "Revising Your Rough Draft," to help students navigate the revision process, covering such topics as spicing up introductions, revising for variety and style, and using the active voice.
- Based on reviewer comments, we will no longer cover the Council of Biology Editors (CBE) style manual and *The Columbia Guide to Online Styles* (CGOS). Never fear, however, because links to both will be available on the book's website.
- We have revised and brought up to date every discussion of computer technology and its usefulness to the researcher.

- We have gone through the entire book, updating everything we say about writing a research paper, making changes—large and small—to virtually every chapter and topic.
- We continue to use an accessible and friendly writing style that students and instructors have told us they like.
- We have changed two of the three sample student papers used as annotated models of the different styles.
- A highlight is the addition of dividers to form a gallery of images representing discoveries that have improved life on our planet. Each divider represents a famous researcher and/or a famous discovery—from Copernicus's discovery of the earth's orbit around the sun to the invention of the computer and its revolutionary effects. Teachers may use these dividers as springboards for student research or just as a break in the routine of teaching how to write a good paper.

Acknowledgments

A textbook is, above all else, a collaborative work involving many people from many different walks of life. These anonymous workers often do near miraculous work that contributes greatly to the outcome of a project. Among the people whose contributions we wish to acknowledge are the following: Lyn Uhl, Publisher; Mandee Eckersley, Managing Marketing Manager; Kathleen Remsberg, Marketing Assistant; Jennifer Kostka, Content Project Manager; Margaret Chamberlain-Gaston, Senior Rights Acquisition Account Manager, Text, and Jessica Gwinn, freelance text permissions researcher at Writer's Research Group; Sheri Blaney, Senior Permissions Manager, Images, and Billie Porter, photo researcher; Anita Wagner, copyeditor; Kathy Finch, proofreader; and Jamie Armstrong, Production Coordinator. To them and the unnamed others who worked invisibly in the background to produce this book, we offer our heartfelt thanks. Finally, we would like to thank our development editor, Laurie Runion, for a job well done in keeping us focused and ushering us through the maze of options and decisions involved in writing and publishing a book. She did what a good editor always does: She made what could've been a pain, a pleasure.

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