

Citing electronic publications in the *Canadian Journal of Plant Science*

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In January 1997 the *Canadian Journal of Plant Science*, together with the other scientific journals of the Agricultural Institute of Canada (AIC) took a bold step into the world of electronic publication. Now subscribers can choose whether to receive the traditional print versions of the journal, or print plus electronic access via the World Wide Web (WWW). The decision to begin electronic distribution of the journal was both logical and timely. Since the first volume of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* appeared in London in 1665, the methods of publication and dissemination of scientific information have changed little. While conferences, letters and student exchanges represented the primary informal methods of information exchange, archival scientific information resided only in paper-based journals. The informal methods of communication remain today relatively unchanged from their original form or focus, but the way in which science archives new findings and discoveries has undergone an amazing revolution in a little over a decade.

Today, driven by the need for faster information retrieval and search capability, electronic media have become the most rapidly growing segment of the scientific publishing industry. A review published over 2 years ago reported that there are 140 scholarly journals in Canada alone published in whole or in part on the WWW and the number is growing by the day (McCallum 1997). Increasingly, scientific information is being archived electronically and e-Journals are just the tip of the iceberg. Personal electronic media such as CD-ROMs, are repositories of vast amounts of information and have enjoyed spectacular success in the areas of education and popular reference. Meanwhile trade magazines, newspapers and Internet sites are all important news sources, which may have particular relevance to the planning, execution or interpretation of research. Concerns over unreliability of information from non-peer reviewed sources are valid, but such sources are as prevalent in print, as in electronic media.

Peer review of all contributions to the *Canadian Journal of Plant Science* using a well-established set of guidelines remains the cornerstone of journal editorial policy (Jefferson 1998). Among several questions asked of reviewers is whether the authors have adequately and correctly credited the contribution of previous workers and explained their results in the context of the published body of knowledge. Today that "published body of knowledge" includes not only print media but information published on CD-ROM, Internet sites and electronic journals resident on the WWW. To date the *Canadian Journal of Plant Science* has

been silent on how to cite electronic sources of information that can and should be referenced in articles submitted for publication. At the 1998 meeting of the AIC Journals Policy Subcommittee meeting in Vancouver, we were charged with the task of developing guidelines for the citation of electronic publications in *Canadian Journal of Plant Science* articles. Several factors guided our work: The need for clarity and precision (to enable readers to easily access cited electronic articles); An e-citation style that was both internally consistent and similar to that already in place in other scientific print and electronic journals; A good match with print media reference styles already established for the *Canadian Journal of Plant Science*.

Two organizations have led the way in developing appropriate e-citation styles: The American Psychological Association (APA) and the Modern Language Association (MLA). We have drawn on their recommendations (APA 1999; MLA 1998), together with the articles of Beckleheimer (1999), Gibaldi (1995) and Li and Crane (1997) in compiling the guidelines for *Canadian Journal of Plant Science*. The general form of the citation is Author. Date. Title [Type of medium]. Available: [Access date]. The following examples give the appropriate modifications of this basic form for individual publication types.

1. Individual Works

1.1 CD-Rom

Author/editor. Year Title (edition). [Medium]. Available: Supplier, mailing address; Internet address/database identifier or number¹.

Example

Dirr, M. A. 1997. Photo-library of woody landscape plants on CD-ROM. [CD-ROM]. Available: Timber Press, Portland, OR; <http://www.timber-press.com/>

¹Note: Access date is not needed when the medium is a CD-ROM.

1.2 Internet site

Author/editor. Year. Title. [Medium] Available: Site/Path/File [Access date]

Example

Irvine, B. 1998¹. Can producers use an in-row liquid suspension to inoculate pulse crops? [Online] Available: <http://res.agr.ca/brandon/brc/newsnote/news191.htm> [1 October 1998].

¹Write "Undated" when the electronic publication date is not available. Internet site publication dates are often provided as "last update" information either at the top or bottom of the page.

2. Parts of Works

Author/editor. Year. Title. In: Source (edition) [Medium] Available: Site/Path/File. [Access Date]

Example

Kinsman, G. 1986. Blueberries in Nova Scotia. In The history of the lowbush blueberry industry in Nova Scotia 1880-1950. [Online] Available: <http://agri.gov.ns.ca/nsbi/wbic/hist/kinsman1880/index.htm> [27 Sept. 1998].

3. Electronic Journal Articles¹

Author. Year. Title. Journal Title. Volume². [Medium] Available: Site/Path/File [Access Date]

Example

Bustamante, P. I. and Hull, R. 1998. Plant virus gene expression strategies. *Electronic J. Biotech.* 1. [Online] Available: <http://www.ejb.org/content/vol1/issue2/full/3/> [31 Aug. 1999].

¹When a journal is published in dual media (e.g. print and online) the print version citation is preferred.

²Volume information may be omitted when an e-journal or magazine does not provide it.

4. Magazine Articles (Internet)

Author. Year. Month. Article Title. Magazine Title. Volume. [Medium]. Available: Site/Path/File [Access date].

Example

Kupferman, E. 1999. March. How to prevent diseases of fruit in storage. *Good Fruit Grower* [Online] Available: <http://www.goodfruit.com/archive/Mar1-99/cursplt.html> [31 Aug. 1999].

5. Newspapers (Internet)

Author. Year. Day month. Article Title. Newspaper Title. [Medium] Available: Site/Path/File [Access date].

Example

Raine, M. 1998. 24 Sept. Fall fertilizing should be as late as possible. *The Western Producer* [Online]. Available:

http://www.producer.com/docs/news/Sep_24_98/prod3.htm [10 Oct. 1998].

Certain media have been omitted from these guidelines. Bulletin board listings, discussion group threads, electronic mail etc. are not included since they usually represent nothing more than "personal communication" and can be cited as such according to present guidelines. There is little doubt that electronic publication will grow rapidly over the next few years. The lifetime and persistence of electronic articles (particularly on WWW sites) is sometimes uncertain and this represents a concern for scientists and information management professionals alike. It is important that reference lists in *Canadian Journal of Plant Science* articles are as current as possible at time of publication; authors are encouraged to access and check cited electronic media immediately before submitting a final version of the paper. While the sometimes ephemeral nature of electronic sources of information poses problems for us all, we must provide our readers with the best possible path to the background information which underpins each scientific article.

American Psychological Association. 1999. Electronic reference formats recommended by the American Psychological Association. [Online]. Available: <http://www.apa.org/journals/webref.html> [31 Aug. 1999].

Beckleheimer, J. 1999. How do you cite URL's in a bibliography? [Online]. Available: <http://www.nrlssc.navy.mil/meta/bibliography.html> [31 Aug. 1999].

Gibaldi, J. 1995. *MLA handbook for writers of research papers.* 4th ed. Modern Language Association, New York, NY. 293 pp.

Jefferson, P. G. 1998. Electronic publishing and peer review. *Can. J. Plant Sci.* 78: 515-516.

Li, X. and Crane, N. 1997. Bibliographic formats for citing electronic information [Online]. Available: <http://www.uvm.edu/~ncrane/estyles/> [31 Aug. 1999].

McCallum, D. L. 1997. Canadian scholarly electronic journals. [Online]. Available: <http://www.schoolnet.ca/vp-pv/cesn/e/ejcano.htm> [31 Aug. 1999].

Modern Language Association. 1998. A guide for writing research papers. Available: <http://webster.commnet.edu/mla.htm> [31 Aug. 1999].