

# Journal of Information Literacy

ISSN 1750-5968

Volume 7 Issue 2

December 2013

## Book Review

White, J. 2013. Book Review of Pears, R. and Shields, G. 2013. *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. *Journal of Information Literacy*, 7(2), pp.171-172.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11645/7.2.1866>

**Copyright for the article content resides with the authors, and copyright for the publication layout resides with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, Information Literacy Group. These Copyright holders have agreed that this article should be available on Open Access.**

“By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.”

Chan, L. et al 2002. *Budapest Open Access Initiative*. New York: Open Society Institute. Available at: <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> [Retrieved 22 January 2007].

**Pears, R. and Shields, G. 2013. *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 120 pp. ISBN: 9781137273116. £10.99. Pbk.**

**Jonathan White, Subject Librarian, University of Derby Buxton. Email: [j.p.white@derby.ac.uk](mailto:j.p.white@derby.ac.uk)**

Librarians and teachers are all too aware that for some students the process of understanding and applying citation and referencing can be quite an arduous task. Very often it appears that the job of supporting students in their learning of these concepts is only frustrated by the number of referencing styles available and the variations in them across institutions.

Pears and Shields' *Cite Them Right* addresses this problem directly by providing standardised versions of the most popular referencing styles, including Harvard, OSCOLA and MLA. The main focus is on the Harvard referencing style and the book comprehensively deals with over 140 different resource types in this style. Through its nine editions the authors have refined this style and made the book as easy to understand as possible. One of the most cherished features of the book is its consistent layout and the inclusion of neat examples for each resource. The book is not just an encyclopaedia of resource types though; it also includes detailed sections covering the process of correctly quoting, paraphrasing and summarising the work of others, as well as a clear section on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. *Cite Them Right* is, therefore, a comprehensive manual on all aspects of using information from another source, from the start of the process through to the finish.

*Cite Them Right* is an extremely popular text. According to Suzannah Berrywood (2013), editor of the *Palgrave Study Skills* series, the book has sold over 100,000 copies and is the second best-selling title in the series after *The Study Skills Handbook* (Cottrell 2013). The book is extremely influential and for many students, academics and librarians it has become the 'official' guide to referencing. As such, any revisions to it are of significance to the information literacy community.

In the new, ninth edition, the introduction (p.xiii) lists the the main revisions to the book, which the authors acknowledge are based upon feedback received from readers of the previous edition (p.xiii). One change, which in particular stands out as being noteworthy, is the addition of a section on 'non-UK naming conventions' (p.11-14). This section explains how to order into Harvard style, the names of authors from countries and cultures with different name ordering conventions to those of the UK. This could be useful in aiding student understanding of the international nature of research and will be a useful reference for those helping students with such queries. Likewise, the inclusion of more examples of legal sources in the Harvard style is a welcome and useful addition to this edition. In particular, the inclusion of instructions for referencing *Hansard* in the Harvard style (p.46) will be useful to non-law students using evidence of Parliamentary speeches and debates in their work.

One of the most important changes to the new edition is the removal of the distinction between digital and print versions of some resources when referencing, most notably for books and journal articles. In practice this means that the referencing of print and electronic formats would be identical in most cases, therefore removing the requirement for detailed information on the format and location. Removing elements such as '[Online]', 'Available at: URL' and an accessed date for journal articles (see Pears and Shields 2010, p.22) seems appropriate, as most articles can be found with the bibliographical details and/or a DOI. The URL for journal articles copied from databases can sometimes prove useless for the reader anyway, as in many instances the URL will have been generated by a database based upon the user's authentication. Many databases do not provide permalinks and very often students would not understand that they should use these

where they are provided. Pears and Shields' advice that the reader should be able to "locate the article using the resources they can access and search" (p.30) is therefore quite suitable. Pears and Shields state that these changes "simplify the referencing process" (p.xiii), and I would agree that for students trying to quickly understand and apply a referencing style the process would indeed be simpler. The changes also bring digital resources in line with other, more traditional formats, where format and location are not usually a part of referencing.

However, the removal of these elements could be problematic for the reader when trying to quickly identify and locate digital resources used by students. Digital resources are diverse in their nature and issues around the publication of digital resources, including differences between: 'traditionally' published and self-published; paid-for content and open access content; and, HTML based content and content in proprietary formats, are of increasing importance. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult for readers and assessors of work to identify and locate some of the more obscure resources students find and use. Acknowledgement of the format and location of resources in referencing can allow for easier identification by readers and also provide a platform for student thinking and learning about the resources they use. For e-books especially, the inclusion of elements such as 'Title of e-book/online collection' and 'Available at: URL' in the previous edition (Pears and Shields 2010, p.15) allowed the writer to express which version of a text they had used. These elements can prove useful if incomplete or obscure editions of a work are used by students from websites such as *Google Books* (Google 2012) and *Project Gutenberg* (2013).

Of course, *Cite Them Right* should not be seen as a replacement for good teaching of referencing and no book can account for every eventuality. *Cite Them Right* does however, remain an important text for students, academics and those supporting them. The ninth edition is a comprehensive, yet reasonably priced manual, which can support students in their learning of important concepts. This edition encompasses a wider breath of material than before, but remains accessible to those navigating the sometimes baffling world of information sources and academic writing. The authors have responded to changes in education and to the changing nature of academic information. This adaptability continues to be the book's key strength.

## References

Berrywood, S. 2013. Telephone conversation with J. White. 9 October 2013.

Cottrell, S. 2013. *The study skills handbook*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Google. 2012. *Google Books* [Online]. Available at: <http://books.google.co.uk/> [Accessed: 4 October 2013].

Pears, R. and Shields, G. 2010. *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Project Gutenberg. 2013. *Project Gutenberg* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/> [Accessed: 4 October 2013].