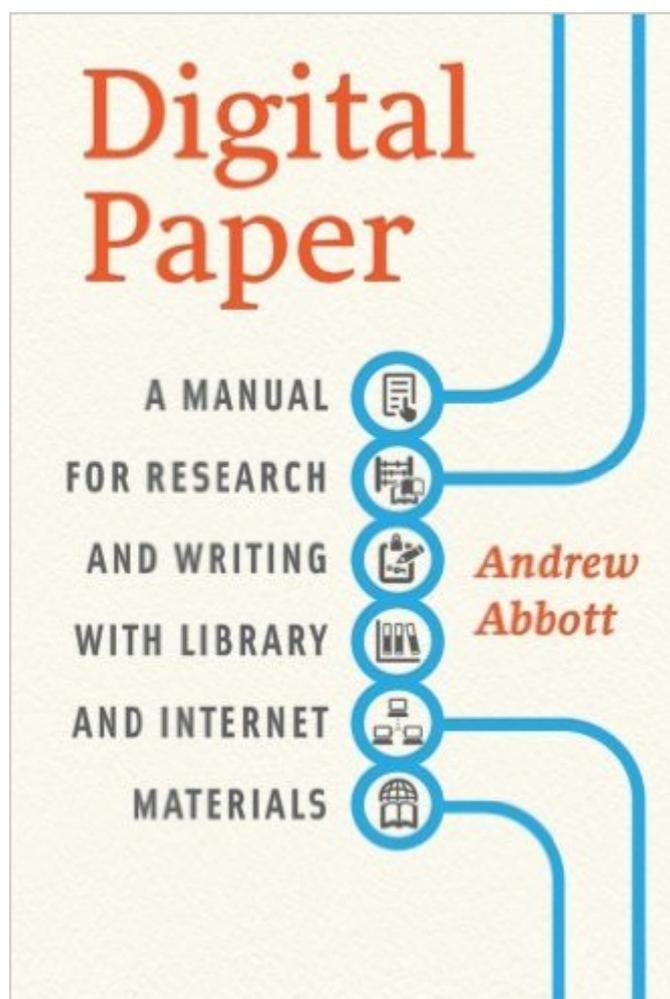# Digital Paper: A Manual For Research And Writing With Library And Internet Materials (Chicago Guides To Writing, Editing, And Publishing)

Synopsis

Todayâ ™s researchers have access to more information than ever before. Yet the new material is both overwhelming in quantity and variable in quality. How can scholars survive these twin problems and produce groundbreaking research using the physical and electronic resources available in the modern university research library? In Digital Paper, Andrew Abbott provides some much-needed answers to that question. Abbott tells what every senior researcher knows: that research is not a mechanical, linear process, but a thoughtful and adventurous journey through a nonlinear world. Â He breaks library research down into seven basic and simultaneous tasks: design, search, scanning/browsing, reading, analyzing, filing, and writing. He moves the reader through the phases of research, from confusion to organization, from vague idea to polished result. He teaches how to evaluate data and prior research; how to follow a trail to elusive treasures; how to organize a project; when to start over; when to ask for help. He shows how an understanding of scholarly values, a commitment to hard work, and the flexibility to change direction combine to enable the researcher to turn a daunting mass of found material into an effective paper or thesis. More than a mere Â how-to manual, Abbottâ ™s guidebook helps teach good habits for acquiring knowledge, the foundation of knowledge worth knowing. Those looking for ten easy steps to a perfect paper may want to look elsewhere. But serious scholars, who want their work to stand the test of time, will appreciate Abbottâ ™s unique, forthright approach and relish every page of Digital Paper.

Book Information

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This is the kind of book that will make even older academics say, â œI dearly wish Iâ ™d had this when I was a grad student myself.â • It should be required reading for all academic researchers, especially those doing work on thesis- or dissertation- or book-length projects. It is written by a sociologist who draws on a great deal of personal research experience himself, as well as on his position of having guided the work of many graduate students, of whom he writes, â œthey asked the questions that made me realize what I was failing to teach.â • This guide is one of the strongest antidotes available to the naÃƒÂ ve notion that â œone stop shoppingâ • on the Internet or in a few subscription databases is adequate for real scholarship. In Abbottâ ™s own words, â œmy computational experience gives me an insiderâ ™s view of digital knowledge tools, and my skepticism about themâ "of which more belowâ "is based not on simple conservatism but on having extensively used such tools.â • The authorâ ™s hands-on experience is evident throughout the book from the many examples he gives. Particularly refreshingâ "and valuableâ "is his emphasis on the importance of the serious reading of actual books. â œYou cannot do serious research entirely by scanning, skimming, extracting, or other forms of surface engagement.â • Equally important is his discussion of browsing in book stacks as in important component of researchâ "an art and a skill that is nowadays too often entirely overlooked by those who think that specifying keywords in a blank search box is generally all that is needed to retrieve whatever one is searching for. In Abbottâ ™s words, â œSince keyword tools produce immense lists most of whose entries are useless, those who develop them have created sorting mechanisms to bring the useful material to the top.

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