

by Paul K. Graham, AG, CG, CGL

itations play important roles in genealogical research and writing. Fundamentally, they help us return to a source in the future. In our working files, citations illustrate the quality of our sources and reveal opportunities to seek sources of ever-increasing credibility. More importantly, though, citations allow others to make an independent judgment about the material we used as evidence, whether focusing on a specific source or understanding the breadth of our research. Despite these benefits, many people find it challenging to create these necessary references, which is problematic considering their utility.

Citation difficulties revolve around two issues: understanding the source well enough to extract information needed for a citation and arranging those details in a clear and unambiguous order. Elizabeth Shown Mills designed *Evidence Explained (EE)* to help researchers in both areas.² Despite its evident utility, the large amount of material presented in *EE* leaves some people frustrated by its perceived complexity and inconsistency. Deconstructing its contents—focusing on the order of details within each citation—reveals fundamental citation structures that can ease these frustrations.

¹ Board for Certification of Genealogists, Genealogy Standards, 50th anniversary edition (Nashville, Tennessee: Ancestry, 2014), p. 6, Standard 3.

² Elizabeth Shown Mills, Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 2015). For this article, I used the third edition of EE.

Difficulties with Evidence Explained

Like any book of its size and content, *Evidence Explained* provokes negative reactions for various reasons. In 2011, Jeff La Marca, PhD, began his own project to create what he calls Simple Citations. He lamented that *EE* is "far too complex" and "very inconsistent." La Marca went so far as to say "it's often difficult, if not impossible, to tell what the information within many of *EE*'s citations refer to." By this, he apparently meant that citation elements do not appear consistently in the same position (or sometimes not at all), though he does not address the labeled QuickCheck Models at the outset of each chapter.

In his recent book on citations, Scottish genealogist Ian G. Macdonald laments that *EE* specifies formats for "for almost every imaginable source," rather than providing a broad approach.⁴ The book's overwhelming size "makes it difficult to use . . . and some would describe it as an exercise in pedantry." Macdonald pivots on that critique to explain "that the use of generic categories [in his book] . . . is a more manageable and useful approach to source referencing."⁵

Frustrations with *EE* can also be found sprinkled among some of the book's otherwise-positive Amazon reviews. One complains it is "too complicated" and "cumbersome to use." Another describes it as a "look-up manual for how to cite a specific source," but "if you are looking for explanations to help you understand what information is important to cite and why . . . then I would recommend you look elsewhere." A third asks for a companion guide to help identify "the most appropriate model or models out of the hundreds of citation models provided."

On her blog in 2015, Mills addressed criticisms leveled at her book, responding to a participant in an online forum who thought *EE* was "way too big," that there were "too many options," and that they shouldn't be required to "memorize a thousand different [citation] models." Mills replied with patience, explaining that citations and her work are "not about memorizing a pattern or replicating some formula." Instead, we must *understand* the records we use and respond accordingly.

By far the most common complaints about *EE* are its complexity and its inconsistency. Those complaints are easy to level and difficult to defend against. At almost 900 pages and with more than 1,100 source examples, any reader skimming through

the tome should be forgiven for assuming it's too complex. The perception of inconsistency is understandable too. On its face, a comparison of citation models in any particular chapter reveals multiple options for how to arrange information. These options, though, all come with explanations. Those who are looking for a rigid citation formula for a particular source are likely to be frustrated. To better understand the reasoning behind those options, readers must delve deeper into the explanatory text.

The Book's Arrangement

Successfully working with any reference book starts by understanding its overall arrangement.

Beginning with the third edition, *EE* includes a QuickStart Guide in the flyleaf at the front of the book. The guide starts with a step-by-step process for using the book. Then, it distills the many source examples down to ten citations in two categories. The first category addresses publications (both print and online); the second category addresses historical records and their scanned, online counterparts.

Evidence Explained begins with two chapters explaining the fundamentals of research and citations. These essential chapters lay the foundation for the rest of the book. Twelve subsequent chapters—each representing a broad source type such as archival material, local court records, and censuses—contain detailed explanations about sources and citations.

Chapters are prefaced by QuickCheck Models, providing examples for sources discussed in greater detail within the chapter. The models are diagrammed and labeled to help users understand which citation elements are essential for each type of record. Each chapter leads with a Basic Issues discussion of common issues for that source type.

Within the chapters, source types are arranged in two levels. Using chapter 7 as an example, the first level speaks to sections that divide the main chapter topic: Original Materials, Image Copies, and Derivatives. In the second level, each of those sections include references to specific sources arranged alphabetically. For example, the source types in the LDS Genealogical Compilations section of Church Records are Ancestral File, Family Group Records Collection, International Genealogical Index, and Pedigree Resource File.

³ Jeff La Marca, "Overview of Simple Citations," Simple Citations: Making Life Easier for Family Historians (simplecitations.com/overview.html : accessed 28 June 2018).

⁴ Ian G. Macdonald, Referencing for Genealogists: Sources and Citation (Stroud, England: The History Press, 2018), 26.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Katie, "That might be useful to an acquisitions department," three-star review of *Evidence Explained*, 2nd ed., 18 October 2014, Amazon (amazon.com: accessed 29 November 2017).

⁷ SG, "A Citation Manual for (American) Genealogists," three-star review of Evidence Explained, 2nd ed., 4 October 2014, Amazon (amazon.com: accessed 29 November 2017).

⁸ Aphotog, "Lots of rules, citation models and discussion, but not a how-to book," three-star review of *Evidence Explained*, 3rd ed., 11 September 2015, Amazon (amazon.com : accessed 29 November 2017).

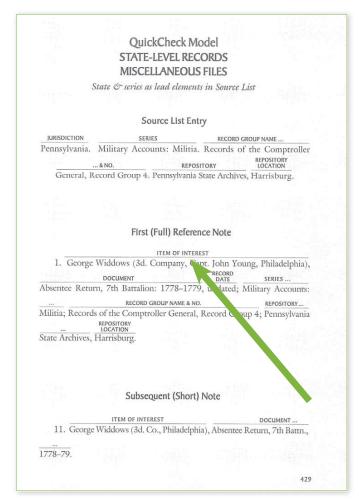
⁹ Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Citations, Rigmarole & Aha! Moments," QuickTips: The Blog @ Evidence Explained (evidenceexplained.com/quicktips/citations-rigmarole-aha-moments : accessed 29 November 2017).

Sources are treated in three ways. The Source List Entry is the bibliographic format. The First (Full) Reference Note is the footnote or endnote. The Subsequent (Short) Note is an abbreviated format to be used after the full note.

Analysis

Now that we have a sense of the book's arrangement, how might we approach *Evidence Explained* to address the perceptions of complexity and inconsistency? Complaints largely focus on the nitty-gritty details—the fact that the book contains multiple hundreds of examples. To reduce the complexity and reveal consistency, we can deconstruct the material to escape the trees and get an overview of the forest. Looking beyond the details reveals common themes.

To begin this analysis, I transcribed the book's 170 Quick-Check Models into a spreadsheet. I used First Reference Note models because they contain the most detail and are therefore more likely to reveal inconsistency and complexity. As I dissected the citations, I used *EE*'s generic field description words in my spreadsheet rather than the specific details for each source.



Generic field descriptions.

The data-entry process revealed that similar source components are referred to in different ways, depending on the source. To allow for direct comparison, I replaced varying field descriptions with a common term. For example, in a *Creator* column, I listed "Creator" for what *EE* describes variously as Compiler, Agency, and Corporate Author. Consolidating the field descriptions helped me begin to see patterns in the citation models. I also maintained the same punctuation (commas, periods, and semi-colons, etc.) used in *EE* when I deconstructed the citations.

For example, let's consider the QuickCheck Model citation for a pension file.

RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD PENSION FILE, CH. 11, P. 545

Leonard Ray Anderson pension file, SS no. 702-07-8940, 1941; Records of the Railroad Retirement Board, 1934–, National Archives Record Group 184; RRB-Congressional Inquiry Section, Chicago, Illinois.

I took each component of the citation and labeled it according to its description. Broken down, that pension citation follows this pattern:

Item of Interest [Pensioner, SS no.], Record Date; Record Group Title, Record Group Number; Repository, Repository Location.

Patterns Revealed

Once extracted, I arranged the citations by their common structures, which revealed consistent patterns based on where the source is housed. The process revealed distinct differences between those in a local or state government agency or office and those in a formally organized archive (or federal government agency).

Local and state government agency records (and publications) identify in this order:

Creator, Title (or Type of record), and Item of Interest.

To those three elements are added details about how the record was accessed:

Format, Repository, Publication Title (and Publication Data), Publication Detail, Microfilm, and Credit Line.

Original records found in formally organized archives identify in this order:

Item of Interest, File, Series, Collection, Record Group, and Repository.

Records accessed directly from national government agencies follow a similar format to those in archives.

Four Citation Structures

Analyzing the QuickCheck Models revealed that, when all of the detail is consolidated, *Evidence Explained* contains core citation structures for four types of records: local or state government records, publications, archived records, and national government records. All four have basic similarities, with archive records and national government records grouped together, and with local government records and publications grouped together.

Another important element of *EE* citations is that the information about the record itself is separated from the details about how it was accessed. For example, local and state government records can be accessed at a repository, on preservation microfilm, or as images through a published website or microfilm.

CORE CITATION STRUCTURES FOR FOUR TYPES OF RECORDS

Local or State Government Records

Creator, Title/Type, Item of Interest; Access Method (see three access method options below).

Repository.

Microfilm.

Image Format, Creator, Publication Title (Publication Data), Item of Interest; Credit Line.

Publications

Creator, Title (Publication Data), Item of Interest; Credit Line.

(Note how the publication structure is also used as the access method for local or state government records that are publications, but adding the Image Format).

Archived Records

Item of Interest; File; Series; Collection; Record Group; Repository.

National Government Records

Item of Interest, Title, Repository.

Applying the Consolidated Structures

Awareness of these broad structures makes building citations more straightforward. Thinking this way makes even the most complex-seeming source manageable and understandable. To write a citation based on *Evidence Explained* models, we only need to expand the consolidated form by repeating individual elements as needed. The following examples show how the process works.

10 Evidence Explained, QuickCheck Models, Image Copies: Online, 381.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORD WITH IMAGES ONLINE¹⁰

Start with local government record structure.

Creator, Title/Type, Item of Interest; Access Method.

Add access method.

Creator, Title/Type, Item of Interest; Format, Creator, Publication Title (Publication Data), Item of Interest; Credit Line.

Expand model to reflect all citation elements and publication data punctuation.

Creator, Item of Interest, Format, Creator, Publication Title (Publication Data: Publication Data); Credit Line.

Rename elements to reflect specific situation.

Jurisdiction, Case File, Case Label, Court Term, "Record Title," Record Date; Format, Website Creator, *Website Title* (Webpage: Access Date).

Arrive at full citation.

City of St. Louis, Missouri, Circuit Court Case no. 1, Dred Scott v. Irene Emerson, November Term 1846, "Petition of False Imprisonment for Dred Scott," 6 April 1846; images, St. Louis Circuit Court and Washington University, *St. Louis Circuit Court Historical Records Project* (http://stlcourtrecords.wustl.edu/display-case-images.php?caseid=7150&page=1: accessed 1 April 2015).

Authored Chapter in Edited Book¹¹

Start with publication structure.

Creator, Title (Publication Data), Item of Interest; Credit Line.

Expand model to reflect all citation elements.

Creator, "Title," Creator, Title (Publication Data, Publication Data, Publication Data), Item of Interest.

(The Credit Line is dropped when the publication is not referencing some other source.)

Build in punctuation and italics to follow humanities practice.

Creator, "Title," Creator, *Publication Title* (Publication Data: Publication Data, Publication Data), Item of Interest.

Rename elements to reflect specific situation.

Chapter Author, "Chapter Title," Book Editors, *Book Title* (Publication Place: Publisher, Publication Date), Page Numbers.

Arrive at full citation.

Emily Toth, "Kate Chopin (1850–1904): Knowing What It Means to Miss New Orleans," Janet Allured and Judith F. Gentry, eds., *Louisiana Women: Their Lives and Times* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 116–36, particularly 118.

10

¹¹ Evidence Explained, QuickCheck Models, Print Publications, Book: Chapter, 647.

Microfilmed Records

Treatment of microfilmed records falls into two categories. One form is for records found in a microfilm publication. The other form is for records found on preservation microfilm. The former are "materials . . . commercially filmed for widespread distribution," while the latter are "for preservation purposes only . . . [and] not sold to the public."

MICROFILM PUBLICATION¹³

The record is a document reproduced on a microfilm publication, so it follows the publication structure.

Creator, Title (Publication Data), Item of Interest; Credit Line.

(The Credit Line includes details about the historical record found on the microfilm publication. The item of interest is the specific microfilm roll and location on the roll.)

Expand to include all relevant elements.

Title, Title (Publication Data, Publication Data, Publication Data), Item of Interest; Item of Interest, Item of Interest, Item of Interest.

Replace elements with words specific to the source and add appropriate formatting.

Publication Title, Publication Title (Publication Place: Publisher, Publication Date), Item of Interest; *Ship*, Date, Passenger, Page, Line.

(The Creator is omitted because it is the same as the Publisher.)

Arrive at the full citation.

Registers of Vessels Arriving at the Port of New York from Foreign Ports, 1789–1919, microfilm publication M1066 (Washington: National Archives and Records Service, 1980), roll 27, alphabetical by ship; SS Königin Luise, 23 June 1905, for Rosaria Furia, p. 58, line 2.

PRESERVATION MICROFILM14

The record is reproduced on preservation microfilm, so it follows the local government record structure.

Creator, Title/Type, Item of Interest; Microfilm.

(The Credit Line includes details about the historical record found on the microfilm publication. The item of interest is the specific microfilm roll and location on the roll.)

Expand to include relevant elements.

Creator, Creator, "Title," Item of Interest, Item of Interest, Item of Interest, Microfilm.

Replace elements with words specific to the source.

County, State, "Title," Page, Case, Charge, Date; FHL Microfilm.

Arrive at the full citation.

Lexington County, South Carolina, "Sheriff's Jail Book, 1873-1883," p. 25, State v. Pickens Giles, Larceny, committed to jail 13 February 1875; FHL microfilm 1,027,259.

Archival Records

EE's citation structure for records held in archives follows practices in the history discipline. American-style citations are arranged from the smallest to the largest element. This means that the specific Item of Interest leads the citation and the Repository ends the citation. The middle of the citation contains information about how to find the record within the repository (following the "path" from the file number, collection title, record group, and so on).

ARCHIVED RECORD¹⁶

The record is in an archive, using the archived records structure.

Item of Interest; File; Series; Collection; Record Group; Repository.

Expand model to align with the needs of this record.

Item of Interest, Item of Interest; File, File; Collection; Collection; Repository, Repository.

Rename source elements to reflect the source.

"Record Title," Record Date; Item, Item Number; Subcollection; Main Collection; Repository, Repository Location. Evaluation.

(Mills liberally adds descriptive and evaluative information in a separate sentence following citations in footnotes.)

Arrive at the full citation.

"État De La Force Actuel De La Comp^e De La Mazillier destaché Au Illinois," 2 September 1752; Letterbook, MS LO 377; Vaudreuil Papers (Papers of Pierre de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudeuil), 1740–1753; Loudoun Collection; Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California. [Add descriptive details that affect your analysis of the document.]

Privately held historical documents are treated like archival records. In those situations, the person in possession of the source is the repository. The person's location and year of residence is included to clarify that the "repository" is an individual.

¹² Evidence Explained, Archives and Artifacts, 129–130.

¹³ Evidence Explained, National Government Records, Passenger Manifests: Manuscripts & Microfilm, 574.

¹⁴ Evidence Explained, National Government Records, Passenger Manifests: Manuscripts & Microfilm, 574.

¹⁵ Note that European-style citations generally call for largest-to-smallest arrangement. See Evidence Explained, 118–119.

¹⁶ Evidence Explained, QuickCheck Models, Archived Manuscript Records, 95.

PRIVATELY HELD DOCUMENT¹⁷

The record is in private hands—a personal archive—calling for the archived records structure.

Item of Interest; File; Series; Collection; Record Group; Repository.

Expand the model to include relevant elements.

Item of Interest, Item of Interest, Item of Interest, Item of Interest; File, Collection; Repository, Repository, Repository. Rename the elements to reflect the source.

Author, Recipient, Record Type, Record Date; Item Format, Collection; Owner, Owner's Location, Date of Ownership. (In the place of a file number, the item's format is described.) **Arrive at the full citation.**

Pierre Bertrand Jr., master surgeon, to town of Verdun, France, donation of property, 24 April 1760; original, family copy, Bertrand-Lennon Family Archives; privately held by Rachal M. Lennon, [Address for Private Use,] Cottontown, Tennessee, 2015. [Add Provenance and/or Descriptive Details.]

National Government Agencies

Records held by national government agencies are cited similarly to archived records, following the smallest-to-largest order. Rather than semicolons, citation elements are separated by commas. Also, the File, Collection, and Record Group information found in citations for archived records is not utilized here.

National Government Record¹⁸

The record is held by a national government agency and uses the national government record structure.

Item of Interest, Title, Repository.

Expand model to align with needs of this record.

Item of Interest, Item of Interest, Item of Interest, Series, Repository, Repository.

Rename source elements to reflect the source.

Name, Social Security no., Date, Series, Repository, Repository Location.

Arrive at the full citation.

Theresa Boggus Sammarco, SS no. 116-05-4655, 23 May 1937, Application for Account Number (Form SS-5), Social Security Administration, Baltimore, Maryland.

Citation Options

Many of *EE*'s perceived discrepancies are actually options. Two situations reveal themselves most often. The first is when major

elements are added to the citation. The second is discussion and examples of discipline-specific formats.

Adding Elements

You will recognize situations where clarity calls for adding a major citation element to one of the four structures. A common addition is when Repository details are added to a preservation microfilm citation. The format of an account book from Cornwall, England, in chapter 8 takes the following form:

Creator, Title, Item of Interest; Repository; Microfilm.¹⁹

Week St. Mary, Cornwall, England, Overseer's Accounts, 1710–42, unpaginated, chronologically arranged, 22 April 1731 account of John Colwill Jr.; Cornwall County Record Office, Truro; FHL microfilm 1,597,004, item 3.

The Repository is set off by semicolons as it would be if the citation did not include Microfilm details. This structure is useful in that it indicates use of a third-party microfilm but also identifies where the record is housed.

A letter at The Historic New Orleans Collection is held onsite but accessed on preservation microfilm. It takes the form:

Item; File, Collection; Microfilm; Repository.²⁰

"Marie Louise Margarite Lecomte to Jean Baptiste Siriac, Manumission," 7 August 1829; folder 281, Cane River Collection; THNOC microfilm MSS 182, roll 1; The Historic New Orleans Collection, New Orleans, Louisiana.

This structure indicates use of that repository's preservation microfilm on site at the repository.

Discipline-Specific Structures

Another aspect of *EE's* content to consider is the incorporation of discipline-specific citation models. Mills has not created unique models out of whole cloth; rather, she draws on the full body of citation practice across multiple humanities disciplines. She does not hesitate to include examples that differ from her preferences. A close read of the text reveals references to the citation format preferred by various archives, institutions, and professional bodies.

¹⁷ Evidence Explained, QuickCheck Models, Legal Document, Unrecorded Family Copy, 111.

¹⁸ Evidence Explained, QuickCheck Models, Social Security Administration forms SS-5, 546.

¹⁹ Evidence Explained, QuickCheck Models, Image Copies: Microfilm FHL-GSU Preservation Copy, 380.

²⁰ Evidence Explained, Quick Check Models, Preservation Film: In-House Film, 104.



A prime example of this approach can be found in chapter 11. When discussing basic formats for citing national government records, *EE* demonstrates citations for consular dispatches in two formats.²¹ The National Archives' recommended format emphasizes the original document and its record group. *EE* offers an alternate approach to the same document, emphasizing the microfilm publication that was actually used. More examples of discipline-specific citations are found in chapter 13 with references from the legal field.

EE also defers to broadly accepted citation practices. The best example of this is the approach to census citations. US federal census population schedules published on microfilm by the National Archives follow a format long used by genealogists that more closely reflects the Local Government format than the Publication format.

Some examples, like an Indian census roll, use the full Publication access method. Other examples, like a nonpopulation census, use an abbreviated microfilm access method that echoes the preservation microfilm approach. *EE* explains that "reference notes rarely cite publication data for the standard, ubiquitous film of US censuses." The shaded portions of the citations below show different ways for citing access methods.

Access Method Differences

Full Publication Access Method, Indian Census Roll

1923 Groventre census, Fort Belknap Agency, unpaginated, entry no. 499/484, Ah gi nig [aka] James Snow; Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Indian Census Rolls*, 1885–1940, NARA microfilm publication M595 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1967), roll 129.²³

Abbreviated Access Method, Nonpopulation Census Schedule

1880 U.S. census, Bedford County, Tennessee, "Defective, Dependent, and Delinquent Classes," Insane Inhabitants, 25th civil district, enumeration district (ED) 19, p. 28608-A, John M. Cable; NARA microfilm publication T1135, roll 39.²⁴

Despite the differences, we can still see the broad structure *EE* follows in this situation, and we can learn about the reasons for specific choices within the chapter.

The Big Picture

Evidence Explained contains hundreds of citation examples across all major source types, with associated explanations. The volume of information leads to frustrations about complexity and inconsistency. While there is some validity to those complaints, a deeper understanding of the material reveals clear patterns. Those patterns keep us grounded in a broad perspective to help avoid becoming confused.

Deconstructing source references in *Evidence Explained* reveals four fundamental citation structures: records in local or state government offices, publications, archived records, and records from national agencies. With these models in mind, we can approach our citations from a basic level and work up from there to build a complete reference. We can be more confident and effective when we construct citations, which can only strengthen our research product.



Paul K. Graham, AG, CG, CGL, is a Senior Genealogist at AncestryProGenealogists, where he conducts research for clients and for the television show Who Do You Think You Are? He conducts research across the English-speaking world, with particular expertise in families of the US South. Paul holds a master's degree in public his-

tory. He has authored or co-authored numerous books and articles, most pertaining to families and records of the state of Georgia. His publications have been recognized with multiple awards.

²¹ Evidence Explained, National Government Records, 564.

²² Evidence Explained, QuickCheck Models, Microfilm: "Nonpopulation" Schedules NARA Film Publication, 242.

²³ Evidence Explained, QuickCheck Models, Microfilm: Native-American Tribal Census, 241.

²⁴ Evidence Explained, QuickCheck Models, Microfilm: "Nonpopulation" Schedules NARA Film Publication, 242.