UBLIS 514 Soergel

**Abstracts and Abstracting Guidelines**

**Compiled from several sources and reformatted**

**by Dagobert Soergel**

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2015-10-21

From UBLIS 571 Soergel **Document representation: purpose, structure, process of creation**

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| **Abstracts** as a different form of document representation |
| **Indicative abstract** (also called descriptive abstract)  Merely indicates what the document is about or relevant for, pointer data.  **Informative abstract**  In addition, includes some of the substantive data given in the document or reports some generalization that can be derived from the document.  Both types of abstract assist the reader in deciding whether to pursue the document further (and incur any costs in doing so). An informative abstract often gives the substantive data needed and thus saves the user the trouble of having to consult the document itself.  Other categorization of abstracts: Reporting vs. analytical-critical. Book reviews |

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| **The structure of document representations** (abstracts or lists of index terms)  Use a standard structure appropriate for the subject domain. The sample abstract illustrates one possibility. More discussion in the lecture on document structure.  Using terms from a controlled vocabulary (that should reflect the users' language) in the abstract may increase readability and will increase findability. |

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| **Abstracting &indexing as a cognitive process**. Empirical study of document-oriented indexing |
| Parts of the document considered  Method of information assimilation (reading, interpreting pictures)  Reading/scanning to identify subject matter of interest to users — request-oriented reading  Reading/scanning to fill slots of a frame  Building up mental image  Selecting topics to be included in the abstract or the index terms. Request-orientation comes into play here as well  Choosing a form of expression  Knowledge brought to bear on these operations - from own knowledge or tools (such as thesauri) consulted, for example  General knowledge of the field  Knowledge of user needs  Frames for phenomena in the field  Knowledge of terminology  Knowledge of document structure, including knowledge of cue words |

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| **Automatic or computer-assisted abstracting and indexing** |

Conigrave KM, Saunders JB, Reznik RB. 1995

**Predictive capacity of the AUDIT questionnaire for alcohol ­related harm**.

Addiction 90 (1995) 1479-1485.

**Indicative abstract**

This study deals with early identification of alcohol use disorders. It examined the ability of the Alcohol Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) question­naire published by the World Health Organization to predict which subjects experience medical or social harm from their drinking. Subjects were 350 emergency room patients who answered the AUDIT questions was part of a comprehensive medical assessment. 250 subjects were interviewed after 2-3 years to determine alcohol-related medical disorders, health care utilization, social problems and hazardous drinking at the time of follow-up. Audit is compared to biochemical indicators for its ability to predict these conditions.

**Informative abstract**

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| '**AUDIT can predict a range of harmful consequences of alcohol consumption**' |
| **Background**. Drinking problems often are not recognized. Most of the people who become alcohol-dependent do not seek help until their problems are obvious. Late diagnosis is of particular concern because effective and low-cost methods of treating problem drinking at an early stage are now available. In 1989, the WHO published a brief 10-item screening ques­tionnaire, the Alcohol Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) specifically designed to identify problem drinkers before physical dependence or chronic problems have arisen. AUDIT has been reported to have a sensitivity of 92% and a specificity of 94% in detecting hazardous or harmful alcohol use. This study examined the ability of the AUDIT question­naire to predict which subjects experience medical or social harm from their drinking. |
| **Methods**. Subjects were 350 patients who attended a hospital emergency ward in 1984-1985. They underwent a comprehensive assessment of medical history, alco­hol use, dependence and related problems in an interview schedule; the AUDIT questions were inter­spersed among other items. Biochemical variables measured included y-glutamyltransferase (GGT) and mean corpuscular volume (MCV). Twenty sub­jects refused to be contacted after 2-3 years or were excluded because of malignant disease. Thus, a co­hort of 330 subjects (212 men, 108 women) was left for the longitudinal study; 250 subjects were inter­viewed again after 2-3 years. Interviewers were blind to the results of the initial assessment. The AUDIT questions were scored from 0 to 4. Subjects who scored 8 or more were classified as potentially hazardous drinkers. AUDIT was examined for its ability to predict a number of end-points including alcohol-related medical disorders, health care utilization, social problems and hazardous drinking at the time of follow-up. |
| **Results**. Of those who scored 8 or more on AUDIT at the initial interview, 61% experienced alcohol-related social problems compared with 10% of those with lower scores. They also reported more frequently al­cohol-related medical disorders and hospitalization. The AUDIT score was a better predictor of social problems and of hypertension than laboratory markers. Its ability to predict other alcohol-related illnesses was similar to the laboratory tests, but GGT was the only significant marker of mortality. |
| **Conclusions**. AUDIT is a brief and convenient questionnaire which can readily be incorporated into the standard medical history. It can predict a range of harmful consequences of alcohol consumption. AUDIT should prove a valuable tool in screening for haz­ardous and harmful alcohol use so that intervention can be provided to those at particular risk of adverse consequences. |

**From *Alcohol Research***

**How to Write an Abstract**

## Philip Koopman, Carnegie Mellon University

October, 1997

Revised by Dagobert Soergel October 2015

Original at https://users.ece.cmu.edu/~koopman/essays/abstract.html

# Abstract

Readers to not have time to read an entire paper to decide whether it is useful, even if the full text is easily available, and sometime obtaining the full text requires considerable effort and/or expense. Therefore, it is vital for you as author to write a complete but concise description of your work to entice potential readers into obtaining a copy of the full paper. This article describes how to write a good computer architecture abstract for both conference and journal papers. Writers should follow a checklist consisting of: motivation, problem statement, approach, results, and conclusions. Following this checklist should increase the chance of people taking the time to obtain and read your complete paper.

# Introduction

Now that the use of on-line publication databases is wide-spread and Web searches often return a URL to the abstract rather than the full text, and even if the full text is retuned users do not have time ti read every paper to see whether it is useful, writing a really good abstract has become even more important than it was a decade ago. Abstracts have always served the function of "selling" your work. But now, instead of merely convincing the reader to keep reading the rest of the attached paper, an abstract must often convince the reader to hunt down a copy of the article through their library website or on the Web at large and possibly pay for it. In a business context, an "executive summary" is often the *only* piece of a report read by the people who matter; and it should be similar in content if not tone to a journal paper abstract.

# Checklist: Parts of an Abstract (see next page)

Despite the fact that an abstract is quite brief, it must do almost as much work as the multi-page paper that follows it. In a computer architecture paper, this means that it should in most cases include the following sections. Each section is typically a single sentence, although there is room for creativity. In particular, the parts may be merged or spread among a set of sentences. Use the following as a checklist for your next abstract:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Parts of an abstract** | |
| **1 Motivation** | *Why do we care* about the problem and the results? If the problem isn't obviously "interesting" it might be better to put motivation first; but if your work is incremental progress on a problem that is widely recognized as important, then it is probably better to put the problem statement first to indicate which piece of the larger problem you are breaking off to work on. This section should include the importance of your work, the difficulty of the area, and the impact it might have if successful. |
| **2 Problem statement** | What *problem* are you trying to solve? What is the *scope* of your work (a generalized approach, or for a specific situation)? Be careful not to use too much jargon. In some cases it is appropriate to put the problem statement before the motivation, but usually this only works if most readers already understand why the problem is important. |
| **3** Approach | *How did you go about solving* or making progress on the problem? Did you use simulation, analytic models, prototype construction, or analysis of field data for an actual product? What was the *extent* of your work (did you look at one application program or a hundred programs in twenty different programming languages?) What important *variables* did you control, ignore, or measure? |
| **4** Results | *What's the answer?* Specifically, most good computer architecture papers conclude that something is so many percent faster, cheaper, smaller, or otherwise better than something else. Put the result there, in numbers. Avoid vague, hand-waving results such as "very", "small", or "significant." If you must be vague, you are only given license to do so when you can talk about orders-of-magnitude improvement. There is a tension here in that you should not provide numbers that can be easily misinterpreted, but on the other hand you don't have room for all the caveats |
| **5** Conclusions | *What are the implications* of your answer? Is it going to change the world (unlikely), be a significant "win", be a nice hack, or simply serve as a road sign indicating that this path is a waste of time (all of the previous results are useful). Are your results *general*, potentially generalizable, or specific to a particular case? |
|  |  |

# Other Considerations

An abstract must be a fully self-contained, capsule description of the paper. It can't assume (or attempt to provoke) the reader into flipping through looking for an explanation of what is meant by some vague statement. It must make sense all by itself. Some points to consider include:

* Meet the word count limitation. If your abstract runs too long, either it will be rejected or someone will take a chainsaw to it to get it down to size. Your purposes will be better served by doing the difficult task of cutting yourself, rather than leaving it to someone else who might be more interested in meeting size restrictions than in representing your efforts in the best possible manner. An abstract word limit of 150 to 200 words is common.
* Any major restrictions or limitations on the results should be stated, if only by using "weasel- words" such as "might", "could", "may", and "seem".
* Think of a half-dozen search phrases and keywords that people looking for your work might use. Be sure that those exact phrases appear in your abstract, so that they will turn up at the top of a search result listing.
* Usually the context of a paper is set by the publication it appears in (for example, *IEEE Computer* magazine's articles are generally about computer technology). But, if your paper appears in a somewhat un-traditional venue, be sure to include in the problem statement the domain or topic area that it is really applicable to.
* Some publications request "keywords". These have two purposes. They are used to facilitate keyword index searches, which are greatly reduced in importance now that on-line abstract text searching is commonly used. However, they are also used to assign papers to review committees or editors, which can be extremely important to your fate. So make sure that the keywords you pick make assigning your paper to a review category obvious (for example, if there is a list of conference topics, use your chosen topic area as one of the keyword tuples).

# Conclusion

Writing an efficient abstract is hard work, but will repay you with increased impact on the world by enticing people to read your publications. Make sure that all the components of a good abstract are included in the next one you write.

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**Ten Steps to Writing an Effective Abstract**

http://www.sfedit.net

An abstract is a condensed version of the manuscript, which highlights the major points

covered, concisely describes its content and scope, and reviews its material in

abbreviated form. It is usually the first section read and sets the tone of the paper for

the reviewer. It must be concise and easy to read and must cover the important points

of the paper.

Many publications have a required style for abstracts; the "Guidelines for Authors"

provided by the publisher will provide specific instructions. Stay within the publisher’s

guidelines, or your manuscript might be rejected.

Writing an abstract involves summarizing a whole manuscript and providing as much

new information as possible. The best way to write an effective abstract is to start with a

draft of the complete manuscript and follow these 10 steps:

|  |
| --- |
| **10 steps in writing an abstract** |
| 1. Identify the major objectives and conclusions. 2. Identify phrases with keywords in the methods section. 3. Identify the major results from the discussion or results section. 4. Assemble the above information into a single paragraph. 5. State your hypothesis or method used in the first sentence. 6. Omit background information, literature review, and detailed description of methods. 7. Remove extra words and phrases. 8. Revise the paragraph so that the abstract conveys only the essential information. 9. Check to see if it meets the guidelines of the targeted journal. 10. Give the abstract to a colleague (preferably one who is not familiar with your work) and ask him/her whether it makes sense. |

Writing an effective abstract will improve the chances of your manuscript being

accepted, encourage people to read it, and increase its impact.

A number of studies have indicated that a badly written manuscript with poor use of

English, even with good science, has less chance of being accepted and published.

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/abstracts/>

**Reformatted by Dagobert Soergel**, no changes in the text. 2015-10-20



### The Writing Center r

***Abstracts***

**1 What this handout is about**

This handout provides definitions and examples of the two main types of abstracts: descriptive and informative. It also provides guidelines for constructing an abstract and general tips for you to keep in mind when drafting. Finally, it includes a few examples of abstracts broken down into their component parts.

**2 What is an abstract?**

An abstract is a self-contained, short, and powerful statement that describes a larger work. Components vary according to discipline. An abstract of a social science or scientific work may contain the scope, purpose, results, and contents of the work. An abstract of a humanities work may contain the thesis, background, and conclusion of the larger work. An abstract is not a review, nor does it evaluate the work being abstracted. While it contains key words found in the larger work, the abstract is an original document rather than an excerpted passage.

**3 Why write an abstract?**

You may write an abstract for various reasons. The two most important are selection and indexing. Abstracts allow readers who may be interested in a longer work to quickly decide whether it is worth their time to read it. Also, many online databases use abstracts to index larger works. Therefore, abstracts should contain keywords and phrases that allow for easy searching.

**3.1 Selection**

Say you are beginning a research project on how Brazilian newspapers helped Brazil’s ultra-liberal president Luiz Ignácio da Silva wrest power from the traditional, conservative power base. A good first place to start your research is to search Dissertation Abstracts International for all dissertations that deal with the interaction between newspapers and politics. “Newspapers and politics” returned 569 hits. A more selective search of “newspapers and Brazil” returned 22 hits. That is still a fair number of dissertations. Titles can sometimes help winnow the field, but many titles are not very descriptive. For example, one dissertation is titled “Rhetoric and Riot in Rio de Janeiro.” It is unclear from the title what this dissertation has to do with newspapers in Brazil. One option would be to download or order the entire dissertation on the chance that it might speak specifically to the topic. A better option is to read the abstract. In this case, the abstract reveals the main focus of the dissertation:

*This dissertation examines the role of newspaper editors in the political turmoil and strife that characterized late First Empire Rio de Janeiro (1827-1831). Newspaper editors and their journals helped change the political culture of late First Empire Rio de Janeiro by involving the people in the discussion of state. This change in political culture is apparent in Emperor Pedro I’s gradual loss of control over the mechanisms of power. As the newspapers became more numerous and powerful, the Emperor lost his legitimacy in the eyes of the people. To explore the role of the newspapers in the political events of the late First Empire, this dissertation analyzes all available newspapers published in Rio de Janeiro from 1827 to 1831. Newspapers and their editors were leading forces in the effort to remove power from the hands of the ruling elite and place it under the control of the people. In the process, newspapers helped change how politics operated in the constitutional monarchy of Brazil.*

From this abstract you now know that although the dissertation has nothing to do with modern Brazilian politics, it does cover the role of newspapers in changing traditional mechanisms of power. After reading the abstract, you can make an informed judgment about whether the dissertation would be worthwhile to read.

## 3.2 Indexing

Besides selection, the other main purpose of the abstract is for indexing. Most article databases in the online catalog of the library enable you to search abstracts. This allows for quick retrieval by users and limits the extraneous items recalled by a “full-text” search. However, for an abstract to be useful in an online retrieval system, it must incorporate the key terms that a potential researcher would use to search. For example, if you search Dissertation Abstracts International using the keywords “France” “revolution” and “politics,” the search engine would search through all the abstracts in the database that included those three words. Without an abstract, the search engine would be forced to search titles, which, as we have seen, may not be fruitful, or else search the full text. It’s likely that a lot more than 60 dissertations have been written with those three words somewhere in the body of the entire work. By incorporating keywords into the abstract, the author emphasizes the central topics of the work and gives prospective readers enough information to make an informed judgment about the applicability of the work.

**4 When do people write abstracts?**

* when submitting articles to journals, especially online journals
* when applying for research grants
* when writing a book proposal
* when completing the Ph.D. dissertation or M.A. thesis
* when writing a proposal for a conference paper
* when writing a proposal for a book chapter

Most often, the author of the entire work (or prospective work) writes the abstract. However, there are professional abstracting services that hire writers to draft abstracts of other people’s work. In a work with multiple authors, the first author usually writes the abstract. Undergraduates are sometimes asked to draft abstracts of books/articles for classmates who have not read the larger work.

**5 Types of abstracts**

There are two types of abstracts: **descriptive** and **informative**. They have different aims, so as a consequence they have different components and styles. There is also a third type called **critical**, but it is rarely used. If you want to find out more about writing a critique or a review of a work, see the UNC Writing Center **handout on writing a literature review**. If you are unsure which type of abstract you should write, ask your instructor (if the abstract is for a class) or read other abstracts in your field or in the journal where you are submitting your article.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Descriptive abstracts** | A descriptive abstract indicates the type of information found in the work. It makes no judgments about the work, nor does it provide results or conclusions of the research. It does incorporate key words found in the text and may include the purpose, methods, and scope of the research. Essentially, the descriptive abstract describes the work being abstracted. Some people consider it an outline of the work, rather than a summary. Descriptive abstracts are usually very short—100 words or less. |
|  | *The two most common abstract types—descriptive and informative—are described and examples of each are provided.* |
| **Informative abstracts** | The majority of abstracts are informative. While they still do not critique or evaluate a work, they do more than describe it. A good informative abstract acts as a surrogate for the work itself. That is, the writer presents and explains all the main arguments and the important results and evidence in the complete article/paper/book. An informative abstract includes the information that can be found in a descriptive abstract (purpose, methods, scope) but also includes the results and conclusions of the research and the recommendations of the author. The length varies according to discipline, but an informative abstract is rarely more than 10% of the length of the entire work. In the case of a longer work, it may be much less. |
|  | *Abstracts present the essential elements of a longer work in a short and powerful statement. The purpose of an abstract is to provide prospective readers the opportunity to judge the relevance of the longer work to their projects. Abstracts also include the key terms found in the longer work and the purpose and methods of the research. Authors abstract various longer works, including book proposals, dissertations, and online journal articles. There are two main types of abstracts: descriptive and informative. A descriptive abstract briefly describes the longer work, while an informative abstract presents all the main arguments and important results. This handout provides examples of various types of abstracts and instructions on how to construct one.* |

## 5.1 Which type should I use?

Your best bet in this case is to ask your instructor or refer to the instructions provided by the publisher. You can also make a guess based on the length allowed; i.e., 100-120 words = descriptive; 250+ words = informative.

**6 How do I write an abstract?**

The format of your abstract will depend on the work being abstracted. An abstract of a scientific research paper will contain elements not found in an abstract of a literature article, and vice versa. However, all abstracts share several mandatory components, and there are also some optional parts that you can decide to include or not. When preparing to draft your abstract, keep the following **key process elements** in mind:

**6.1** **Key process elements**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Key process elements (parts of an abstract)**  (adapted with permission from Philip Koopman, “How to Write an Abstract.”) | |
| **1 Reason for writing** | What is the importance of the research? Why would a reader be interested in the larger work? |
| **2 Problem** | What problem does this work attempt to solve? What is the scope of the project? What is the main argument/thesis/claim? |
| **3 Methodology** | An abstract of a scientific work may include specific models or approaches used in the larger study. Other abstracts may describe the types of evidence used in the research |
| **4 Results** | Again, an abstract of a scientific work may include specific data that indicates the results of the project. Other abstracts may discuss the findings in a more general way. |
| **5 Implications** | What changes should be implemented as a result of the findings of the work? How does this work add to the body of knowledge on the topic? |
| **All abstracts include** | * A full citation of the source, preceding the abstract. * The most important information first. * The same type and style of language found in the original, including technical language. * Key words and phrases that quickly identify the content and focus of the work. * Clear, concise, and powerful language. |
| **Abstracts may include** | * The thesis of the work, usually in the first sentence. * Background information that places the work in the larger body of literature. * The same chronological structure as the original work. |

## 6.2How not to write an abstract:

* Do not refer extensively to other works.
* Do not add information not contained in the original work.
* Do not define terms.

## 6.3 If you are abstracting your own writing

When abstracting your own work, it may be difficult to condense a piece of writing that you have agonized over for weeks (or months, or even years) into a 250-word statement. There are some tricks that you could use to make it easier, however.

### 6.3.1 Reverse outlining:

This technique is commonly used when you are having trouble organizing your own writing. The process involves writing down the main idea of each paragraph on a separate piece of paper–**see our short video**. For the purposes of writing an abstract, try grouping the main ideas of each section of the paper into a single sentence. Practice grouping ideas using **webbing** or **color coding**.

For a scientific paper, you may have sections titled Purpose, Methods, Results, and Discussion. Each one of these sections will be longer than one paragraph, but each is grouped around a central idea. Use reverse outlining to discover the central idea in each section and then distill these ideas into one statement.

### 6.3.2 Cut and paste:

To create a first draft of an abstract of your own work, you can read through the entire paper and cut and paste sentences that capture key passages. This technique is useful for social science research with findings that cannot be encapsulated by neat numbers or concrete results. A well-written humanities draft will have a clear and direct thesis statement and informative topic sentences for paragraphs or sections. Isolate these sentences in a separate document and work on revising them into a unified paragraph.

## 6.4 If you are abstracting someone else’s writing

When abstracting something you have not written, you cannot summarize key ideas just by cutting and pasting. Instead, you must determine what a prospective reader would want to know about the work. There are a few techniques that will help you in this process:

### 6.4.1 Identify key terms:

Search through the entire document for key terms that identify the purpose, scope, and methods of the work. Pay close attention to the Introduction (or Purpose) and the Conclusion (or Discussion). These sections should contain all the main ideas and key terms in the paper. When writing the abstract, be sure to incorporate the key terms.

### 6.4.2 Highlight key phrases and sentences:

Instead of cutting and pasting the actual words, try highlighting sentences or phrases that appear to be central to the work. Then, in a separate document, rewrite the sentences and phrases in your own words.

### 6.4.3 Don’t look back:

After reading the entire work, put it aside and write a paragraph about the work without referring to it. In the first draft, you may not remember all the key terms or the results, but you will remember what the main point of the work was. Remember not to include any information you did not get from the work being abstracted.

**6.5 Revise, revise, revise**

No matter what type of abstract you are writing, or whether you are abstracting your own work or someone else’s, the most important step in writing an abstract is to revise early and often. When revising, delete all extraneous words and incorporate meaningful and powerful words. The idea is to be as clear and complete as possible in the shortest possible amount of space. The Word Count feature of Microsoft Word can help you keep track of how long your abstract is and help you hit your target length.

**7 Examples**

**7.1 Example 1: Humanities abstract**

Kenneth Tait Andrews, “‘Freedom is a constant struggle': The dynamics and consequences of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement, 1960-1984″ Ph.D. State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1997 DAI-A 59/02, p. 620, Aug 1998

*This dissertation examines the impacts of social movements through a multi-layered study of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement from its peak in the early 1960s through the early 1980s. By examining this historically important case, I clarify the process by which movements transform social structures and the constraints movements face when they try to do so. The time period studied includes the expansion of voting rights and gains in black political power, the desegregation of public schools and the emergence of white-flight academies, and the rise and fall of federal anti-poverty programs. I use two major research strategies: (1) a quantitative analysis of county-level data and (2) three case studies. Data have been collected from archives, interviews, newspapers, and published reports. This dissertation challenges the argument that movements are inconsequential. Some view federal agencies, courts, political parties, or economic elites as the agents driving institutional change, but typically these groups acted in response to the leverage brought to bear by the civil rights movement. The Mississippi movement attempted to forge independent structures for sustaining challenges to local inequities and injustices. By propelling change in an array of local institutions, movement infrastructures had an enduring legacy in Mississippi.*

Now let’s break down this abstract into its component parts to see how the author has distilled his entire dissertation into a ~200 word abstract.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject domain: History** | | **Used in** | |
|  |  | History | Science |
| **1 Why do this diss./study** |  |  | X |
| **2 What the dissertation does** | This dissertation examines the impacts of social movements through a multi-layered study of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement from its peak in the early 1960s through the early 1980s. By examining this historically important case, I clarify the process by which movements transform social structures and the constraints movements face when they try to do so. | X | X |
| **3 How the dissertation does it** | The time period studied in this dissertation includes the expansion of voting rights and gains in black political power, the desegregation of public schools and the emergence of white-flight academies, and the rise and fall of federal anti-poverty programs. I use two major research strategies: (1) a quantitative analysis of county-level data and (2) three case studies. | X |  |
| **4 What materials are used** | Data have been collected from archives, interviews, newspapers, and published reports | X |  |
| **5 Results**  **(**used for science study**)** |  |  | X |
| **6 Conclusion** | This dissertation challenges the argument that movements are inconsequential. Some view federal agencies, courts, political parties, or economic elites as the agents driving institutional change, but typically these groups acted in response to movement demands and the leverage brought to bear by the civil rights movement. The Mississippi movement attempted to forge independent structures for sustaining challenges to local inequities and injustices. By propelling change in an array of local institutions, movement infrastructures had an enduring legacy in Mississippi. | X |  |
| **Keywords**  (both) | social movements  Civil Rights Movement  Mississippi  voting rights  desegregation | X | X |

**7.2 Example 2: Science Abstract**

Luis Lehner, “Gravitational radiation from black hole spacetimes” Ph.D. University of Pittsburgh, 1998 DAI-B 59/06, p. 2797, Dec 1998

*The problem of detecting gravitational radiation is receiving considerable attention with the construction of new detectors in the United States, Europe, and Japan. The theoretical modeling of the wave forms that would be produced in particular systems will expedite the search for and analysis of detected signals. The characteristic formulation of GR is implemented to obtain an algorithm capable of evolving black holes in 3D asymptotically flat spacetimes. Using compactification techniques, future null infinity is included in the evolved region, which enables the unambiguous calculation of the radiation produced by some compact source. A module to calculate the waveforms is constructed and included in the evolution algorithm. This code is shown to be second-order convergent and to handle highly non-linear spacetimes. In particular, we have shown that the code can handle spacetimes whose radiation is equivalent to a galaxy converting its whole mass into gravitational radiation in one second. We further use the characteristic formulation to treat the region close to the singularity in black hole spacetimes. The code carefully excises a region surrounding the singularity and accurately evolves generic black hole spacetimes with apparently unlimited stability.*

This science abstract covers much of the same ground as the humanities one, but it asks slightly different questions.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Subject domain: Science** | | **Used in** | |
|  |  | History | Science |
| **1 Why do this diss./study** | The problem of detecting gravitational radiation is receiving considerable attention with the construction of new detectors in the United States, Europe, and Japan. The theoretical modeling of the wave forms that would be produced in particular systems will expedite the search and analysis of the detected signals |  | X |
| **2 What the study does** | The characteristic formulation of GR is implemented to obtain an algorithm capable of evolving black holes in 3D asymptotically flat spacetimes. Using compactification techniques, future null infinity is included in the evolved region, which enables the unambiguous calculation of the radiation produced by some compact source. A module to calculate the waveforms is constructed and included in the evolution algorithm. | X | X |
| **3 How the dissertation does it** |  | X |  |
| **4 What materials are used** |  | X |  |
| **5 Results** | This code is shown to be second-order convergent and to handle highly non-linear spacetimes. In particular, we have shown that the code can handle spacetimes whose radiation is equivalent to a galaxy converting its whole mass into gravitational radiation in one second. We further use the characteristic formulation to treat the region close to the singularity in black hole spacetimes. The code carefully excises a region surrounding the singularity and accurately evolves generic black hole spacetimes with apparently unlimited stability. |  | X |
| **6 Conclusion** | . | X |  |
| **Keywords** | gravitational radiation (GR)  spacetimes  black holes | X | X |

**Works consulted**

We consulted these works while writing the original version of this handout. This is not a comprehensive list of resources on the handout’s topic, and we encourage you to do your own research to find the latest publications on this topic. Please do not use this list as a model for the format of your own reference list, as it may not match the citation style you are using. For guidance on formatting citations, please see the **UNC Libraries citation tutorial**.

### Koopman, Philip. “How to Write an Abstract.”

Lancaster, F.W. Indexing and Abstracting in Theory and Practice, 3rd edition. (London: Facet, 2003), 95.

### Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. “Abstracts.”

**St. Cloud University, LEO, “Writing Abstracts.”**

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Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale International Repertory of Music Literature Internationales Repertorium der Musikliteratur

**Writing abstracts**

Please read these brief guidelines for writing abstracts. The section called *specific concerns*

—only 113 words—is required reading!

**Content**

Convey every important aspect of the item in question. Nonessential matters should be omit- ted, so the reader will not be misled about the item’s focus.

Avoid restating information given in the item’s title; the abstract should add value to the re- cord. Concentrate on the item’s content, not its intellectual background. Address any findings, and do not point out well-known facts (e.g., that Bach was German). If the item presents a conclusion, state it clearly.

In general, an abstract should not exceed 200 words. Take into account the length and detail of the item to be abstracted; for example, most dissertations will merit full-length abstracts, while a short article may be summarized more briefly.

**Style**

Avoid colloquial or informal language and write in complete sentences. Do not include person- al views on the value of the item being abstracted. Many effective abstracts resemble a single well-shaped paragraph, with topic sentence, development, and conclusion.

Writing in the voice of the author (declaratively) yields a more lively abstract than does describing the author’s work, and it lends itself to specificity. For example, here is a pair of abstracts for an essay that accompanies a reissued sound recording:

1. Discusses the recordings of Balinese music made by Odeon and Beka in 1928, which document traditions that are now lost. The changes taking place in Balinese gamelan music at that time are examined, and the influence of the recordings on Colin McPhee is described.
2. In August 1928 representatives from the German record companies Odeon and Beka were sent to Bali; their efforts resulted in 98 recordings on 78 rpm discs of a wide variety of examples of Balinese music. As it happened, at that time Bali was undergoing an artistic revolution. A new style known as kebyar was rapidly gaining popularity, and older ceremonial instruments and styles were literally disappearing, as their bronze instruments were melted down and reforged to accommodate the new style’s requirements; the Odeon/Beka recordings preserve several musical tra- ditions that are now lost. These were the recordings that inspired the young Cana- dian composer Colin McPhee, who first heard them in 1929. McPhee went to Bali in



1931 and remained there for nearly a decade; his activities there included painstak- ing transcriptions of Balinese pieces.

The first of these is descriptive, the second declarative (author’s voice). In theory, one can include the same information with either approach, but in practice, the declarative style forces a writer to be more specific; for example, where the descriptive version says “the changes taking place in Balinese gamelan music at that time are examined” the declarative version details these changes and adds a vivid image of reforging bronze instruments. Similarly, the influence of the recordings on McPhee is briefly described, not simply noted; McPhee is also identified, since he is not generally well-known. Notice how the descriptive style often involves passive verb constructions, which sap the vitality of the writing, while the declarative style tends to produce more robust sentences.

**Specific concerns**

* Give all societies, institutions, and other organizations their full names in their original language (e.g., Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, not Berlin State Library).
* Give full names for lesser-known persons or ones who might be confused with a more famous person with the same last name (e.g., Leopold Mozart).
* If you can, give true titles in the original language, followed by a parenthetical translation if most RILM users are unlikely to know the original (e.g., Šcelkuncik [The nutcracker]).
* If a manuscript is discussed and the RISM siglum and shelf number are provided, include them (e.g., I-Rvat MS CS.154).
* Indicate the time period under discussion as precisely as possible.

**Further examples**

Each of the following examples comprises an abstract (for a fictitious publication) with a number of lapses in style, followed by the same abstract rewritten with improvements.

EXAMPLE 1: Details and conclusions

A critical review of Schumann’s method of composing. Schumann’s compositional habits are considered as viewed by past scholars and in the light of new research. Comments by friends, and by Schumann himself, shed light on this question.

The author of this item obviously had an opinion, but the abstract states neither what that opinion was, how the opinion was formed, nor what conclusions were drawn. What were Schumann’s methods? How have they been viewed? Who exactly (full personal name) held those views? Does the author provide a new conclusion? The following abstract shows how much more useful a well-written declarative abstract can be.

The belief widely accepted by scholars that Schumann composed only while in a kind of frenzy, or trance of inspiration, is refuted by many comments in letters and diary entries by him, and by the comments of contemporaries—the most notable ad-



mirer being Anton Gerhard Wilhelm von Alpenburg, his nephew. At least 13 remarks by Schumann between 1848 and 1850 refer to having worked hard, “though without much interest”.

EXAMPLE 2: Sources

The author compares manuscript psalters from the 14th to the 16th centuries pre- served in church archives.

For a scholarly article, the above abstract is too vague. Factual details are required, in addi- tion to a clear presentation of the author’s conclusions: the abstract states that “the author compares...”, but what are the results? The following abstract both clarifies and summarizes. Note the inclusion of RISM library sigla with shelf numbers.

The St. Kevin Psalter (E-Dpc MS Kev.1234), the Steinhertz Psalters (D-KNd 9876), and all the psalters in the collection of the Ávila Cathedral (E-Ac 12, 34, 35, 36, 37, 453, 1120, 2231) show emendations in many hands, apparently added over long periods. Psalters from Eastern European sources (CZ-Psj MS 3456, 56788, and 56798–801; H-EGb ins. 4564–87) show emendations by a succession of apparently official scribes. Study of the emendations reveals a close relationship among all of these psalters, and variant readings have provided evidence with which to construct a tentative stemma.

EXAMPLE 3: Methodology

Discusses an experiment in vocal pedagogy.

Discussions of experiments describe the methodology and the subjects, and they present any conclusions that were drawn. All of these considerations should be reflected in the abstract.

A 12-month research project evaluated the usefulness of real-time visual feedback technology in the voice studio. Two teachers of singing and eight adult students

(four using the technology, four serving as controls) were observed, interviewed, and videotaped; the participants also kept journals. The use of technology was found to positively affect teaching behaviors and student responses.

EXAMPLE 4: Transliteration and translation

Wedding ceremonies using the tupan in Brod, Macedonia, usually include at least three svirala players (svirlajye) and three tupan players (tupanjye). When the musi- cians arrive on the third day, they go to Jelitsa hill to announce that all guests and musicians are present. As they descend the hill they play Jelichka, which leads into kolo dancing on Sleptsa meadow. At the groom’s house, the musicians play Nebet, a piece honoring the head of the household.

RILM uses ISO transliteration standards for languages that use non-roman writing systems even if the source uses a different system; the standard ISO transliteration of Macedonia Cyrillic yields svirladžije rather than svirlajye, Jelicka rather than Jelichka, and Slepcsa rather than Sleptsa. Also, translations of foreign terms should follow them in parentheses, not the



other way around. Alternate versions and explanations of terms or titles may also follow in parentheses. Note that true titles (i.e., Jelicka; Nebet) are italicized, while genres (i.e., kolo) are not.

Wedding ceremonies using the tupan in Brod, Macedonia, usually include at least three svirladžije (svirala players) and three tupandžije (tupan players). When the mu- sicians arrive on the third day, they go to Jelica hill to announce that all guests and musicians are present. As they descend the hill they play Jelicka, which leads into kolo dancing on Slepca meadow. At the groom’s house, the musicians play Nebet (or Nibet), a piece honoring the head of the household.

**Literature**

**Textbooks on abstracting**

Cleveland, Ana D.; Cleveland, Donald B 2013

**Introduction to Indexing and Abstracting** – 4. ed.

Libraries Unlimited; 2013 July. 384 p.

ISBN10: 159884976X ISBN13: 978-1598849769

Koltay, Tibor 2010

**Abstracts and Abstracting: A Genre and Set of Skills for the Twenty-First Century.**

Chandos (Elsevier); 2010 March. 236 p.

ISBN-10: 184334517X ISBN-13: 978-1843345176

Available as ebook

Lancaster, F. W. 2003

I**ndexing & Abstracting in Theory & Practice.** 3. ed.

University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science; 2003 June

ISBN-10: 0878451226 ISBN-13: 978-0878451227

Cremmins, Edward 1996

**The Art of Abstracting** 2. ed.,

Info Resources Pres; 1996 April. 230 p.

**Standard on abstracting**

**ANSI/NISO Z39.14-1997 (R2015) Guidelines for Abstracts**

<http://www.niso.org/apps/group_public/project/details.php?project_id=124>

**Automatic abstracting**

Lloret, Elena

**Text summarization: An overview**

Elena Lloret

https://www.maketecheasier.com/5-useful-tools-to-summarize-articles-online/

But TopicMarks no longer exists