

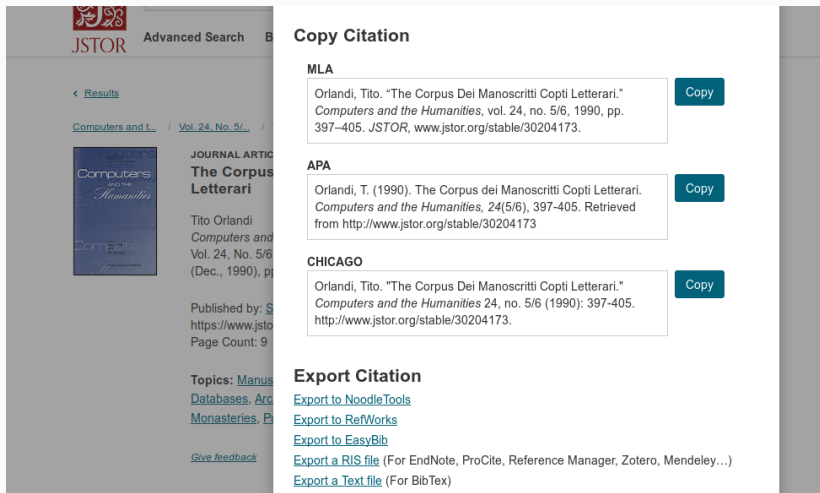
Bibliographies, \LaTeX and friends

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Bibliographic information as a string



The image shows a screenshot of a JSTOR article page. On the left, the article title is "The Corpus Dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari" by Tito Orlandi, published in *Computers and the Humanities*, Vol. 24, No. 5/6 (Dec., 1990), pp. 397-405. The page includes a thumbnail of the journal cover and a "Copy" button. On the right, there are three citation styles: MLA, APA, and CHICAGO. Each style is presented in a white box with a "Copy" button to its right. Below the citation styles, there is an "Export Citation" section with links for "Export to NoodleTools", "Export to RefWorks", "Export to EasyBib", "Export a RIS file" (for EndNote, ProCite, Reference Manager, Zotero, Mendeley...), and "Export a Text file" (for BibTex).

Copy Citation

MLA

Orlandi, Tito. "The Corpus Dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari." *Computers and the Humanities*, vol. 24, no. 5/6, 1990, pp. 397-405. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/30204173. [Copy](#)

APA

Orlandi, T. (1990). The Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari. *Computers and the Humanities*, 24(5/6), 397-405. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30204173> [Copy](#)

CHICAGO

Orlandi, Tito. "The Corpus Dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari." *Computers and the Humanities* 24, no. 5/6 (1990): 397-405. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30204173>. [Copy](#)

Export Citation

[Export to NoodleTools](#)

[Export to RefWorks](#)

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[Export a RIS file](#) (For EndNote, ProCite, Reference Manager, Zotero, Mendeley...)

[Export a Text file](#) (For BibTex)

Figure 1: Bibliographic data as a string

Bibliographic information as a structure

```
@article{10.2307/30204173,  
  ISSN = {00104817},  
  URL = {http://www.jstor.org/stable/30204173},  
  abstract = {The Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari is a project whose original aim was to reconstruct the Coptic codices from the White Monastery in Upper Egypt. The project was later expanded to include all Coptic literature. In 1980 a new project was launched to transfer the data into machine-readable form and make the information available, in as generic a format as possible, to scholars throughout the world.},  
  author = {Tito Orlandi},  
  journal = {Computers and the Humanities},  
  number = {5/6},  
  pages = {397--405},  
  publisher = {Springer},  
  title = {The Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari},  
  volume = {24},  
  year = {1990}  
}
```

Figure 2: Bibliographic data as a structure

This is not a *string of text* in a given form (required by a journal or publisher) but a structure hosting information. It is not bound to a style or even medium but can be *reused* with no limits. The displayed example was downloaded from Jstor.

The BibTeX format

A series of *slots* and *data*. The syntax is very simple:

```
slot = {data},
```

Each instance features a unique label.

```
@article{Orlandi-Corpus-1990,  
  URL = {http://www.jstor.org/stable/30204173},  
  author = {Orlandi, Tito},  
  journal = {Computers and the Humanities},  
  pages = {397--405},  
  title = {The Corpus dei Manoscritti  
          Copti Letterari},  
  volume = {24},  
  year = {1990}  
}
```

Comparison with XML i

The same information can be coded as XML:

```
<bibtex:entry xmlns:
bibtex="http://bibtexml.sf.net/"
bibtex:id="Orlandi-Corpus-1990">
<bibtex:article>
<bibtex:author>Orlandi, Tito</bibtex:author>
<bibtex:title>The Corpus dei Manoscritti
  Copti Letterari</bibtex:title>
...
</bibtex:article>
</bibtex:entry>
```

BibTeX is much lighter, easier to read and conveys the very same amount of information. Since it is not bound to a DTD or scheme, it is very flexible, and can be adapted to the needs of the different areas of scholarship. The danger is to use local, unknown labels, but it is only theoretical. It is in the common interest to accept what the scholarly community shares as a flexible standard: the “basic” slots (author, title...) are necessary in order to use a BibTeX archive.

Biblatex, aka the monster

Bibtex is a *format* but the same name is shared by a *programme*, written by Oren Patashnik and Leslie Lamport in 1985, the most recent version being 0.99d (2019). It is superseded now by:

- a new programme, called `Biber`, that parses data and collects the necessary pieces of information, but does not format anything;
- a \LaTeX package, called `Biblatex`, that – within the \LaTeX compilation cycle – formats data parsed by Biber according to the rules chosen by the user.

Advantages of Biblatex + Biber i

- no problems with Unicode – sorting can be adapted to the language of the document and also single entries can be made aware e.g. of the hyphenation required by the language of that particular entry;
- it is possible to build new styles, which is particularly important in countries, such as Italy, where each publisher wants to receive files formatted according to the particular styles of this or that particular journal or series;
- more flexible use of the `crossref` field;
- full support for related entries, e.g. “reprinted as...” or “translation of...”;

Advantages of Biblatex + Biber ii

- the new XDATA field, a sort of container for one or more fields, e.g. name of a publishing house and place of publication, or name of a series of books, publishing house, place of publication. This can be convenient to avoid useless repetition of information in a file.
- suppression/inclusion of fields is straightforward, even for some entry types.

Using BibTeX to build a scholarly archive

- use the abstract or review slots (for short notes)
- use a link to local files:
 - a text file for one's notes
 - a PDF/PS file to host a copy of the article/book
- use a URL / DOI for non-local files

«Digital tools have yet to develop models for displaying and replicating the self-reflexive operations of bibliographical tools, which alone are operations for thinking and communicating – which is to say, for transforming storage into memory, and data into knowledge. We have to design and build digital environments for those purposes» (McGann 2016, p. 363).

The madness of “bibliographic styles”

- Rule #1: *my* bibliographic style is the best
- Rule #2: don't even try to submit your paper using a different style (see Rule #1)

Using a common international format

```
\usepackage[  
backend=biber,      % not necessary  
style=authoryear, % replace with your style  
{biblatex}  
\addbibresource{sample.bib} % archive(s) to use.  
                        % One line for each archive.
```

Using a customised format i

Biblatex is flexible, and this is very important in the humanities, where each publisher / journal *wants* a particular style. For example:

```
biblio-style: philosophy-verbose
biblatexoptions: backend=biber,
                 annotation=false,
                 autolang=hyphen,
                 backref=true,
                 backrefstyle=three+,
                 classical=true,
                 commacit=true,
                 doi=false,
                 editionformat=superscript,
```

Using a customised format ii

```
eprint=false,  
firstinits=true,  
inbeforejournal=false,  
isbn=false,  
language=auto,  
latinemph=true,  
library=false,  
lowscauthors=false,  
publocformat=publocyear,  
relatedformat=parens,  
sorting=nty,  
url=false,
```

Using a customised format iii

```
volnumformat=plain,  
volumeformat=arabic,
```

```
\AtEveryBibitem{\clearlist{publisher}}
```

```
\AtEveryBibitem{\clearfield{series}}
```

- archives can be called from [Libre/Open]Office and even from MS programmes.
- with Markdown, the use is simple:

```
title: A Test
author: John Tester
bibliography: 'test.bib'
```

This has been noticed by Kenneth Levy in a seminal article [[@Levy:ItalianNeophytes 34](#)], and in more recent literature.

There is no need to run Biblatex: `pandoc` understands the BibTeX format and compiles the file using \LaTeX + `pandoc`'s filter for bibliographic data, called `citeproc`:

```
pandoc --filter pandoc-citeproc bibliotest.md \
-s -o bibliotest.pdf
```

Since Biblatex offers unparalleled features of bibliographic control, it is frequently advisable to use Biblatex along with Markdown + `pandoc`.

How to survive Biblatex: zblbuild

This programme (2015, first version, 2019, second version) offers a GUI interface to select from the huge variety of Biblatex options, and outputs either a Biblatex or a Markdown set of instructions. See <https://ctan.org/pkg/zblbuild>.

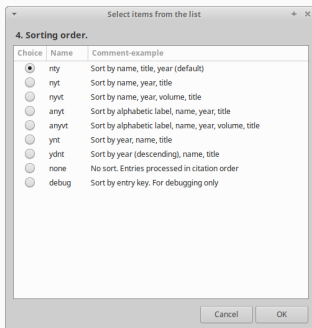


Figure 3: zblbuild – example

References



Lehman, Philipp, Philip Kime, Audrey Boruvka, and Joseph Wright (2018), *The biblatex Package. Programmable Bibliographies and Citations. Version 3.12*, <http://mirrors.ctan.org/macros/latex/contrib/biblatex/doc/biblatex.pdf>.



McGann, Jerome (2016), “Marking Texts of Many Dimensions”, in *A new companion to digital humanities*, ed. by Susan Schreibman, Raymond George Siemens, and John Unsworth, Blackwell companions to literature and culture 93, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, Chichester, West Sussex, UK, chap. 25, pp. 358-376, ISBN: 9781118680605, DOI: 10.1002/9781118680605.ch25, eprint: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/9781118680605.ch25>.



Milanese, Guido (2015), “Zbl-build: a GUI interface for Biblatex”, *ArsTEXnica*, 20, pp. 31-34.



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