Strengthening Your Reference Section in Grant Applications

By Chava Finkler, PhD   Grants Facilitator

You can bolster your grant application by strengthening your reference sections in the following ways:

Reference Management Software

a) Use a reference management software program such as RefWorks (available free at MUN). Please note the RefWorks server will be moving to the US in May, 2015. As a result, material stored on the server will be subject to US legislation such as the Patriot Act. Further information is available at http://www.library.mun.ca/researchtools/refworks/

b) When determining which bibliographic software to use, you may wish to consider cost, availability, location of server, accessibility features, ability to import directly from specific databases as well as compatibility with your existing hardware & software.

c) Some online funding applications allow you to import your publications directly into the document. For example, the Canadian Common CV allows applicants to import articles stored in PubMed directly into the document. Other applications may allow you to import directly from your bibliographic software account.

Considering Content

d) Be careful when spelling authors' names. That specific individual could be adjudicating your application.

e) If you are citing articles in a language other than English, translate the title of the article for the benefit of readers.

f) When applying for Tri-Council funding, ensure references reflect subject eligibility guidelines. As one example, do not cite more than a few health related publications if you apply to SSHRC.

Citation Styles

g) Use the citation style appropriate for your discipline and use it consistently.

h) If you're uncertain about how to cite a specific work such as a court case or music, etc, consult citation guides posted on the MUN library website, accompanied by short explanatory videos. These can be accessed at http://www.library.mun.ca/researchtools/guides/citations/

i) Ensure citations mentioned in the application are included in the reference section. Some grant applications allow citations not mentioned in the text. Check the rules for each funding opportunity.

j) Use up-to-date citations (within last five years unless articles are particularly pertinent).

k) Cite articles in journals considered reputable in your field. Ideally, the journal will have a significant impact factor rating. If you do not know the impact factor rating of a particular journal, contact the university librarian.

l) Cite yourself once or twice to demonstrate your contribution to the relevant literature.

m) When you cite yourself, prioritize single authored or first authored refereed journal articles.

n) Cite a balance of theoretical and practical references.

o) Cite the work of key contributors to demonstrate knowledge of the field.

p) Cite the work of those who disagree with key contributors so the application presents well-rounded arguments.

q) Adhere to all space restrictions. To save space, use commonly accepted abbreviations for journals.