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“I Miss Green”:

A Comparison of Prison and Space Shuttle Design

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“I Miss Green”: A Comparison of Prison and Space Shuttle Design

By the end of the 20th century, man had traveled into space more than 200 times (White 13), orbited the Earth, been to the Moon and back, and aspired to set foot on Mars, while hundreds of miles below, more than 1.36 million people were in prison (Useem and Piehl 2). Although this juxtaposition of images represents the extreme ends of the spectrum of human achievement, prisons and space shuttles share a fundamental design feature: confinement. Prisons and space shuttle design may thus be compared on the basis of confinement to provide insight into basic themes of human nature and limitations. In order to understand physical design, one must be aware of the underlying purpose that motivates it. Therefore, design considerations must include: 1) general structure, 2) psychological effects, and 3) economic efficiency.

I. General Structure

The general category of structure may be divided into two parts, each with two components: 1) the *abstract* (i.e., that which pertains to the design’s function and purpose, or “mission”) versus the *concrete* (i.e., that which can be mapped) design, and 2) design seen in *theory* or concept versus in *practice*. In regards to part two, although general prison design reference books present the conceptual basis of design by specifying the basic standards and design “do’s” and “don’ts,” one must also consider the likelihood of their execution in reality. The reality behind prison design emerges as psychological effects and factors of cost are investigated.

A. General Structure of Prisons

In *Discipline and Punish*, philosopher Michel Foucault explains the historical background of discipline and prison, two symbiotic components of the penal system, in relation to punishment. According to Foucault, “penal imprisonment, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, covered both the deprivation of liberty and the technical transformation of individuals” (Foucault

233). In this sense, prison is both a punitive and disciplinary device. Recently, the general consensus from academic and government sources is that a prison's function should be to rehabilitate the prisoners in a confined, surveyed environment that protects them and society from dangerous behavior. For example, *Building Type Basics for Justice Facilities*, a guidebook for designers, states that "the role of correctional facilities is to protect society from unruly or dangerous persons who have broken the law and have been sentenced by the courts to incarceration. ... Incarceration therefore includes an emphasis on rehabilitation" (Phillips and Griebel 117). Phillips and Griebel describe prison as a protective rather than punitive mechanism. The *Handbook of Correctional Institution Design and Construction* completely disowns prison's punitive structure: "[the] persistence of archaic and punitive patterns of correctional architecture has not only impeded the progress of rehabilitative programs for adults but has held back advances in dealing with younger offenders" (Federal Bureau of Prisons 3).

Basic prison design features classification of prisoners and the use of direct, indirect, or intermittent supervision. Upon entering the prison, convicts are distinguished by characteristics such as gender, physical and mental disabilities, and past criminal activity so as to identify special needs and to preclude potentially dangerous interactions (Phillips and Griebel 119). The classification system allows prisoners to be divided into minimum-, medium-, and maximum-security facilities, which determine the type of housing and range of activities. Direct supervision refers to a type of surveillance in which officers are in direct contact with the prisoners, and is commonly manifested in small groups ("pods"). Indirect supervision involves the presence of a barrier or the usage of remote surveillance devices, while intermittent supervision refers to the situation when prisoners are occasionally observed as guards patrol the prison (119). The level of security threat posed by the prisoners, their social capabilities, cost,

and the extent of potential rehabilitative interaction between guards and inmates determine the type of supervision (119). For example, indirect supervision would be favored over direct for those assigned to maximum-security circumstances. In general, housing may range from one- or two-occupant cells to dormitories, depending on the prisoner's disposition and factors of cost. Phillips and Griebel recommend that cells be at least about 75 to 80 square feet and include the basic bed, desk, chair, sink, and toilet (122).

B. General Structure of Space Shuttles

Unlike the prison's major objective of confinement, whether the emphasis is to protect society, to punish, or to rehabilitate the prisoners, the objective behind a manned space mission can vary widely, depending on what is to be accomplished. Also in contrast to prison design are the key environmental parameters of atmosphere, radiation protection, and temperature, which shape the design (Allen et al. 104). However, prisons and space shuttles do share what are considered less critical design considerations regarding noise, vibration, and lighting (104).

II. Psychological Effects

Comparing purely technical design aspects would result in an empty analysis: it is not of much value to know whether astronauts have slightly more volumetric space than today's prisoners, or vice versa. Thus, the relation between psychology and architecture plays a pivotal role in understanding the fundamental connection between the abstract/concrete and theory/practice, the nature of the ideal and of compromises, and in determining the relative success of any structure. Prison and spaceflight environments share a variety of psychological factors, especially when stresses are experienced over the long term. Negative psychological effects of spaceflight include "extended confinement, separation from traditional social support,

sensory tedium, high social density, and sleep shifting and sleep loss” (Allen et al. 166), all of which may be compared to the stresses of prison life.

A. Negative Effects of Prison and Space Shuttle Design

Confinement is a major psychological stress because of its role of deprivation. In *2010: The Year We Made Contact*, a science fiction film in which the main characters spend several years aboard a space shuttle, Dr. Walter Curnow remarks, “You know what I miss? I miss green. Trees and grass... I love green.” However, the importance of natural anesthetics is not limited to fictional circumstances. According to payload specialist Byron Lichtenberg, the time until astronauts start to miss home may be relatively short: “‘As it’s coming up to eight or nine days, you say, ‘It’ll be kind of nice to get back. I sort of miss hearing the breeze in the trees and the butterflies in the fields and the bubbles of the streams and watching the flowers grow’” (qtd. in White 16). Extended confinement particularly is a major psychological impact because of its influence on other lifestyle components, such as relationships with others, both family and those in the immediate surroundings, and sense of purpose as mediated by one’s work.

A prison’s structure strongly affects a prisoner’s psychological wellbeing. For example, “high social density” is a proliferated issue in prison due to overcrowding. According to Useem and Piehl, authors of *Prison State: The Challenge of Mass Incarceration*, California held 172,000 prisoners in a space originally planned for 100,000 in 2006, while Arizona’s prison population increased 160 prisoners per month with funds planned for a growth of 100 prisoners per month (91). Lack of appropriate space due to limited resources and increasing buildup oftentimes forces prisoners into a state of frustration and stress, especially when these prisoners must be relocated to another facility. In March 2007, such a case resulted in a riot in Indiana

after prisoners were transferred from Arizona, which arose partially due to the prisoners' emotional shock of their distance away from family (91).

In regards to sensory tedium, astronauts are subjected to periods of high vibrations and noise from the space shuttle equipment (Allen et al.; Morpew). Similarly, prisoners endure frequent noise, which is noted in individual recollections. Leonard Peltier, a Native American prisoner since 1976 who was falsely accused of murdering two FBI agents, observes, "I suppose the outside world is noisy most of the time, too, but in here every sound is magnified in your mind... Nameless clanks and creakings, flushings and gurglings sound within the walls... Steel doors are forever grinding and slamming" (Peltier 6). Jim Lewis, author of *New York Times* article, "Behind Bars... Sort of," also attests to the fact that noise is a natural characteristic of prison life with the echo of doors constantly opening and closing (Lewis 1). In regards to sleep loss, the necessary flexibility in astronauts' work schedules for long missions leads to disrupted sleep cycles, which has been known to impact performance (Morpew 75).

B. Psychological Countermeasures to Negative Effects

1. Countermeasures in Space Shuttle Design

In light of the negative psychological pressures on the crew, scientists emphasize preventative measures in order to maximize the probability of successful missions. These countermeasures are carefully tailored to the mission's specific demands and goals, and may be divided into preflight, inflight, and postflight categories (Allen et al. 161, 174). Some forms of support during the inflight phase include personal possessions (e.g., photo albums, books), recreational games, and communication with family and friends (184). Allen et al. emphasize that the mission should have a strong relation with and is the basis for the ensuing countermeasures. A 1995-1998 ground-based, confined life support study conducted by NASA

also concludes that such preventative measures are most effective when designed for the specific mission, due to the variable length of the mission and work structure, among other factors (Holland and Curtis 152). The role of mission and design specificity contrasts markedly with the uniformity found in prisons.

Related to the theme of the mission's underlying *purpose* is the need for the crew to understand the purpose of their work and their role in its success; otherwise, "situations in which 'make work,' too little work, or meaningless tasks are scheduled will have a demoralizing effect on the participant. Previous U.S. experience on board the Mir station, as well as in other confined, ground-based settings, has highlighted this fact" (Holland and Curtis 146). Similarly, the author of *Prison, Inc.*, a memoir written by a prisoner under the pseudonym K.C. Carceral, observes:

Idleness and boredom are worse than a ten-hour day of hard labor because the mind has nothing to do. This helps lead to a riot: prisoners will turn on each other and on the administration just to fill the time... Because of that, every prison should have a lot of programming and structured activities, even if some are meaningless tasks. This is what keepers must do if they are not going to give the kept any freedom. (Carceral 145)

Carceral's opinion parallels that expressed by protagonist Aleksandr Petrovich in *The House of the Dead*, further validating his claim: "Idleness alone would have developed in [the prisoners] criminal tendencies of which they had hitherto had no conception. Without work and without lawful, normal possessions a man cannot live" (Dostoevsky 38).

2. Countermeasures in Prison Design

Although prisons are commonly projected negatively, countermeasures to negative psychological effects do exist and are introduced to the public sphere. In "Behind Bars... Sort Of," Lewis describes a relatively new prison facility in Leoben, Austria that is revolutionary in terms of its "sleek structure" (Lewis 1) and civil appearance. It is considered to be more humane

than current implementations because of its design that houses various amenities for the prisoners, such as individual kitchens, recreational facilities, a courtyard, and prayer rooms. Unlike most prisons today, Leoben uses soundproofing in order to keep cells quiet and, also unusual, is entirely free of vandalism (2), which suggests a sort of accomplishment with the humane approach. Lewis concludes that the wellbeing of both the prisoners and works depends on modern designs that emphasize social interaction and a more complete lifestyle that lessens the transition to normal society and leaves dignities intact.

Comparably, “Designs for Contemporary Correctional Facilities,” a monograph published more than 20 years earlier, features noteworthy projects formed on the basis that the traditional approach to prison design is known to be ineffective through experience. The featured designs emphasize normalcy for both the staff and prisoners without diluting security, in an attempt to establish positive relationships that will reinforce positive behavior (National Institute of Corrections 1). The idea that prisoners should be treated humanely and that healthy staff-inmate relationships are vital to rehabilitation is echoed in Frank Tannenbaum’s article, “Prison Cruelty,” which further demonstrates the convergence between academic sources and personal, firsthand accounts. The ideas expressed in the monograph are in turn similar to those in the *Handbook of Correctional Institution Design and Construction* published in 1949, which demonstrates that prison design has remained rather stagnant for more than 60 years, despite the fact that the same ideals continue to be expressed by those concerned with high incarceration rates and prisoners’ humanity:

There is no possibility of achieving wide-spread success in introducing even those methods and practices of rehabilitation upon which all informed and enlightened correctional administrators are in essential agreement until the physical plant of our correctional institutions is brought into basic harmony with the assumptions of the philosophy of rehabilitation. (Federal Bureau of Prisons 3)

3. *Countermeasures, the Public, and the Emergence of Symbolism in Architecture*

Lewis, the National Institute of Corrections, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons all portray the schism between reality and idealism, the extent of which is determined largely by public opinion. The National Institute of Corrections is careful to note that “the particular facilities depicted in [the] monograph, while exemplary, are not offered as models to be simply duplicated; the American correctional experience warns against facile duplication and the creation of stereotypes” (vi). As mentioned by the National Institute of Corrections, the public is influenced by the persistence of stereotypes, and therefore, of symbols. This relationship between recurring images in society and their assimilation into human consciousness/experience illustrates the *power of architecture*:

‘In our everyday life we experience not solid and immediate facts but stereotypes of meaning. We are aware of much more than what we have ourselves experienced, and our experience is always indirect and always guided... Between the human consciousness and material existence stand communications and designs, patterns and values which influence decisively such consciousness as they have.’ (qtd. in Vogler and Jørgensen 394)

Thus, architects have significant control over the public, although many are reluctant to improve prison design (Lewis 3). The symbolic nature of architecture is universal and extends to space shuttle design in application. For example, Vogler and Jørgensen, authors of an article entitled “Windows to the World, Doors to Space: The Psychology of Space Architecture,” assert that powerful psychological influences arise from of simple design features, such as windows and doors. Windows and doors act as functional symbols that affect one’s perception of space and communication between inhabitants (Vogler and Jørgensen 395). Windows also generally help to relieve sensory tedium in confined spaces by introducing dynamic, visual elements, which shows their role as a potential countermeasure. However, according to Vogler and Jørgensen,

engineers often oppose the implementation of windows due to structural challenges and cost (397).

In order to understand the underlying societal structures that influence architecture, one must evaluate the mindset with which architects and engineers approach their projects by examining the rhetoric that surrounds their justifications. For example, although Larson/Pranke and Vogler/Jørgensen are concerned with space shuttle design, their emphases differ. According to Larson and Pranke,

Another way to look at the crewmember is as a system, comparable to other (hardware) systems. The human has sensors (eyes, ears, touch), mechanical actuators (fingers, arms, legs), self-propulsion (walking), and an on-board processor (brain). The human also has requirements for maintenance (sleep, hygiene), fuel or power (food and water), and a particular type of operating environment (oxygen, temperature). (133)

This particular reference guide uses a rather objective, scientific approach, which is reasonable, considering its goal to decompose an overall mission into its constituent parts and to minimize costs. It is especially understandable in light of the fact that the crew's priority is safety in the immediate physical space from unforgiving environmental factors. Special attention is then given to life support systems, or the "hardware." Secondly, psychological health is considered, whose countermeasures depend on degree of adaptability and duration. The authors delineate human limits. Paradoxically, it is this process that may strain the limits. Objectivity also depends to some extent on man's tolerance and adaptability, which may develop psychological compromises. The prison design monograph also recognizes this objective approach, but refutes it as a suitable means to view prisoners: "Correctional institutions can be designed to be either people management institutions or hardware management institutions. The institutions highlighted in this publication offer the 'people management' approach for facility design and operation" (National Institute of Corrections vi).

C. Positive Psychological Effects of Space Shuttle and Prison Design

Just as there are negative psychological effects and countermeasures to combat those effects, there are also positive psychological effects that arise from design. Many of these positive effects have philosophical underpinnings. In *The Overview Effect*, Frank White discusses spaceflight experience and reviews the question, “What was it like?” through analysis and personal interviews with astronauts. According to White, the term, “overview effect,” refers to the sensation one experiences when one undergoes a dramatic change in perspective, or “new reality,” such as when an astronaut looks upon Earth from space (White 4). Former Senator Edwin Garn of Utah received an opportunity to experience spaceflight in 1985 and stated, “‘My feeling was that I’d seen and done it all, and I didn’t care whether I came back or not... . It wasn’t that I didn’t want to, but if something happened, and we didn’t come back, fine, so be it, just utter peace and contentment and fulfillment’” (qtd. in White 247). It should be noted that the ability for astronauts to have this experience within the space shuttle is directly related to the existence of outside windows.

Positive psychological effects of prison include rehabilitative programs that improve prisoners’ behavior. A study conducted by Di Placido et al. that investigated the effects of gang treatment in prison found a negative correlation between usage of developmental programs in prison and recidivism. Overall, gang participants who underwent treatment were significantly less likely to return to crime than those who did not (Di Placido et al. 106). There was also a negative correlation between duration of the sentence and recidivism (106). Additionally, treated gang members were less involved in “institutional misconduct such as fights and assaults” (108). The conclusions drawn from this study illustrate the hope that reversal of negative associations

made in prison is possible with the implementation of specialized programs that address aggression problems and prisoner solidarity.

III. Economic Factors and Cost Limitations

Despite the fact that there can be psychological benefits that alter negative behavior in prison, the reality of their prevalence is a question of priorities, largely dependent on cost limitations. Although prison architects may be aware of the positive effects of physical design modifications, some prefer to invest in rehabilitative programs instead, due to social and economic pressure. In response to the modern Leoben prison in Austria, John Baldwin, the director of the Iowa Department of Corrections, states, “‘We’re more focused on putting our money into mental-health and re-entry treatment units... I didn’t see a great deal of treatment space, or the kind of classroom space where you can teach job skills. Nice views, great basketball court, but I didn’t think Iowans want to put their money into that sort of thing’” (qtd. in Lewis 4). Once again, the public is a significant factor. However, the cost difference between treating and not treating prisoners can be substantial. Di Placido et al. argue, for example, that the cost of treating an imprisoned gang member is approximately \$100,000 for an eight-month stay, whereas no treatment could cost up to \$2.3 million due to his future crime (Di Placido et al. 109).

According to Useem and Piehl, “In 2001, states spent \$29 billion on prisons, and the federal government spent \$4.3 billion” (Useem and Piehl 6), whereas NASA invested approximately \$3.2 billion total on space shuttle operations in the same year and had a projected budget of \$7.2 billion on human spaceflight (U.S. Census Bureau 533-4). The differences in cost present an interesting juxtaposition that demonstrates society’s trends.

Thus, there are substantial psychological similarities between prison and space shuttle design due to their confining qualities, despite their very different purposes. The basic effects of confinement elucidate the powerful nature of architecture as a mediator of society's thoughts and interactions. Although public opinion influences architects and the amount of desired spending, architects and engineers possess the power to shape the masses, as seen through coherent design symbols, whose degree of persistence may lead to the formation of initial stereotypes. The symbols and fundamental themes, such as man's adaptability, can transform two seemingly unrelated objects into an interconnected system that contrasts design reality with idealism. The relation between stereotypes, symbolism, and the public suggests the importance of reconsidering our values from an objective standpoint, which ultimately determines a design's failure or success.

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Appendix – Annotated Bibliography

Human Spaceflight: Mission Analysis and Design

This reference book by Allen et al., provides a detailed outline of manned spaceflight and the necessary processes involved in creating a mission. Although Allen et al. emphasize the specificity of each mission, they provide generic examples that can be altered accordingly. One of the goals of this book is to minimize design cost, which must be taken into consideration when judging the potentially detrimental psychological effects that may result from such a strain. This reference is intended for a highly academic audience, due to the amount of detail of the design process. The book contains numerous calculations and facts that are not applicable to the casual reader.

Prison, Inc.: A Convict Exposes Life Inside a Private Prison

In *Prison, Inc.*, the author (of pseudonym K.C. Carceral) gives a firsthand account of modern prison life. For example, he notably recalls that one of the fundamental mindsets to survival had shifted during the course of his prison sentence from “us against them” (103), being the prisoners against the guards, to “individual selfishness” (104) that favors manipulation and betrayal over cohesive unity amongst prisoners. The author also states that unregulated movement of prisoners and uneducated guards in the private prison allowed for violence and collaboration between gangs. Carceral offers valuable insight into the psychological elements involved in confinement, which may be compared to views expressed by secondary, academic sources. The book is intended for a general audience and is fairly easy to read.

“Operational Psychology Countermeasures During the Lunar-Mars Life Support Test Project.”

Holland and Curtis’s article focuses on a NASA study psychological factors and constraints and human spaceflight, one of which is confinement. In general, longer duration flights resulted in less tolerance to such psychological strains and should call for additional countermeasures in order to maximize crew health. This article is intended for an audience that is generally familiar with spaceflight design.

“Behind Bars... Sort Of: The Architecture Issue – Rethinking Prison Design.”

In this article, Lewis describes a relatively new prison facility in Leoben, Austria that is revolutionary in terms of its “sleek structure” (Lewis 1) and civil appearance. The prison is considered to be more humane than current implementations because of its design that houses various amenities for the prisoners, such as individual kitchens, recreational facilities, a courtyard, and prayer rooms. Because of popular opinion and the reluctance of influential architects to construct new prisons, the overall architecture has not made recent much progress. Statistics clearly illustrate increased crime rate and the tendency for criminals to get re-imprisoned within the first few years of their liberation (3). The article is intended for the public, as it was featured in the *New York Times*, which is important when considering that prison design is often seen negatively by the public.

Designs for Contemporary Correctional Facilities

This monograph by the National Institute of Corrections features noteworthy prison designs that emphasize normal, campus-like settings in hopes of successfully rehabilitating prisoners. These designs contrast strongly with the oppressive designs that have become nationally stereotypical and expected. The monograph illustrates the functionality of design and a design's psychological consequences. Its purpose is to educate prison designers and the public on successful, modern design.

“Windows to the World, Doors to Space: The Psychology of Space Architecture.”

Vogler and Jørgensen's article is extremely relevant to the subject matter, which is further demonstrated in their explicit mentioning of prison in regards to space shuttle design. The authors capitalize upon architecture's key role in shaping the human consciousness with its embedded symbols, such as windows and doors, that are universally used. The article is also particularly useful in understanding the fundamental role of psychology in regards to space shuttle design. The intended audience is academic.

Handbook of Correctional Institution Design and Construction.

Since this book was published by the United States in 1949, it is an excellent resource with which to compare more modern prison design. The handbook emphasizes the failure of contemporary design to rehabilitate prisoners, with its cruelty and demeaning atmosphere. It also stresses the pivotal role of architecture in producing a more successful environment. Comparison with more current sources indicates that prison design has remained rather stagnant. The intended audience is for legislators and commissions who should have a substantial background on prison design before making powerful decisions.

Prison State: The Challenge of Mass Incarceration

Useem and Piehl discuss the extremely high incarceration rate found in the United States, and expatiate on potential causes, reversal, and impact. Useem and Piehl mention that present studies fail to clarify the effectiveness of surveillance as a way to decrease recidivism, due to the ambiguous role of surveillance as a correction versus detection mechanism and to the diverse range of rehabilitative programs across states (138). Although it is true that there is a high rate of recidivism in the United States (118), the basis of recidivism may be related to the state's implementation of programs to correct behavior.

The Overview Effect

In *The Overview Effect*, Frank White discusses spaceflight experience and reviews the question, "What was it like?" through analyses and personal interviews with astronauts. According to White, the term, "overview effect," refers to the sensation one experiences when he or she undergoes a dramatic change in perspective, or "new reality," such as when an astronaut looks upon Earth from space. In addition, he expands upon the role of human consciousness. This is for an academic audience who wishes to know more about philosophical and psychological implications of spaceflight, which made the source particularly useful for my analysis.

“Deciding on a New Jail Design”

This article outlines the pros and cons of three major prison designs: direct supervision, indirect supervision, and linear. According to the author, direct supervision is the most effective form of prison design as it maximizes the overall safety of the environment. The close proximity of the officers ensures attention to prisoners’ needs and often leads prisoners to behave appropriately in groups, reducing cost and liability issues (Beck, par. 9). In addition, the social interaction between prisoners and officers keeps the relationships healthy. During the day, officers and prisoners are placed together in small groups, or “pods,” where the officers keep watch and are allowed to talk freely with the prisoners (par. 8). Indirect supervision is also an acceptable prison design in that it allows separation between prisoners and officers for safety measures. Beck states that linear prison design, featuring cells lined parallel to a wall, should be avoided, since it can compromise the officers’ and prisoners’ safety and becomes inefficient for larger prisons. The article is intended for an academic audience, as well as for prison designers, and serves as excellent background for physical design.

Prison Architecture: Policy, Design, and Experience

Fairweather and McConville propose that architects play a major functional role in prison design that goes beyond aesthetics. For example, military engineer Joshua Jebb progressed prison design in 19th century Britain with focus on ventilation and heating within cells and on their effects on the prisoners’ health. The “briefing” process, in which the client describes the prison’s purpose to the architect, is particularly important during the planning process because it measures theory against practicality and the architect’s background experience (Fairweather and McConville 61). Questions may be raised and further solutions may be proposed, thus accentuating the architect’s critical role in shaping the experience. This book is intended for an academic audience who is familiar with prison history but wishes to be informed of the current state of prison experience. The psychological insight is largely relevant to my study.

Appendix – Sample Librarian Chat Transcripts

Date: 09:24 2011/04/13

Question ID: 6605650

Chat Transcript: When making an MLA, in-text citation involving multiple authors of different works (for example, when a sentence is a synthesis of information from various sources of represents a general consensus), are the authors' names separated by semi-colons or commas?

[Librarian 09:25:03]: Librarian 'Ellie, Boise State U Library' has joined the session.

[Librarian 09:25:24]: Hmm, not sure, let me see if I can find that in the manual.

Just a moment, I have to go grab one.

[Librarian 09:29:13]: semicolons

[Librarian 09:29:37]: per the MLA Handbook 7th edition 6.4.9

[Helen Kim 09:29:59]: OK. Thank you so much!

[Librarian 09:30:14]: You're welcome. Anything else?

[Helen Kim 09:30:32]: No, that's all. Thank you.

[Helen Kim 09:30:43]: Patron ended chat session.

Helen --

I'm a librarian at UC Berkeley, following up on your question (see transcript below).

There's room for legitimate differences of opinion on this question. I would say that if using a citation-formatting guide were an integral part of the assignment, or if its content were somehow informing your thinking beyond just providing formatting conventions, then you would be expected to cite it.

If not explicitly required, I think you would not need to cite a formatting guide, any more than you would cite a dictionary you used to look up words while writing the paper. Just out of curiosity, I polled my colleagues here, and the three who have responded so far are all in agreement with this interpretation.

Ultimately, however, the decision on what's appropriate to cite in a particular paper rests with your professor or GSI. If you're still in doubt about this, the best way to resolve the question is to check with that person.

~~~

John Kupersmith  
Doe/Moffitt Libraries

UC Berkeley

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Question History:

Patron: Chat Transcript: When using an MLA-formatting guide, do I need to cite that in the bibliography, and if so, would it be under works consulted?

Librarian 1: Librarian 'Phyllis at BMCC' has joined the session.

Librarian 1: Hello. My name is Phyllis. I am librarian from Borough of Manhattan Community College. Your library and my library are part of nationwide group of libraries that staff this service. I will do my best to help you. I am reading your question and will be with you in a moment.

Librarian 1: You need to cite everything you use.

Patron: OK, and the citation would be under "works consulted"?

Librarian 1: At the end of the paper you do at Work cited page that is where you cite works used.

Patron: Oh, I thought that the works cited page was only for citations explicitly mentioned in the text.

Librarian 1: yes. You only cite work you referred to in the text. Both quoted and paraphrased.

Patron: Right. So then the MLA guide should go under "works consulted," not "works cited," right?

Librarian 1: Explain what you mean by work consulted> Do you mean in text citations or a list at the end of the paper?

Patron: A list at the end of the paper.

Librarian 1: That is the same as a work cited page.

Patron: What I meant about citing an MLA guide I used was, do I have to cite it even if I don't paraphrase from it or provide an in-text citation?

Patron: And so therefore the format of the works cited itself is due to the fact I "used" that MLA guide.

Patron: Is it common practice to cite reference books?

Librarian 1: Yes you must cite all sources.

Patron: But you said "you only cite work you refered to in the text." That's not contradictory?

Patron: I'm a little confused.

Librarian 1: Well if you refered to the reference books or used information from that book you must cite it.

Patron: OK. Thanks.

Patron: Patron ended chat session.