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Digital Lab Records

NC State University research policy discusses proper maintenance of lab notebooks as follows:

12. 1 Guidelines for Record-Keeping

12. 1. 1 Good practice is to use bound notebooks for records, making entries on a daily basis. This "diary" format provides among other things, a day-to-day chronology.

12. 1. 2 Use the notebook to record a conception (a complete description of an idea to accomplish a particular purpose or result), laboratory data and drawings. Each entry should be headed with a title and continued on successive pages.



12. 1. 3 Make entries in ink and do not erase or use correction fluid to cover errors. Draw a line through text or drawings to be deleted, and enter the material in corrected form. Draw a line through blank spaces on the page.

12. 1. 4 Separate sheets and photographs pasted to notebook pages should be referred to in an entry. Material that cannot be incorporated in the notebook should be keyed to an entry.

12. 1. 5 Sign and date all entries at the time they are made, and have them witnessed. A witness must be someone who has read the material and is capable of understanding it, yet has nothing to do with producing it. Secure additional witnesses when something important or highly unusual is discovered. Remember that an inventor and his or her potential co-inventors cannot serve as their own witnesses.

12. 1. 6 Set aside a time for making notebook entries and faithfully observe it. Arrange to have two or more colleagues serve as witnesses on a consistent, frequent basis.

Lab notebooks are the property of NC State University and MUST REMAIN IN THE PRIMARY LABORATORY at all times. If you must have access to the information outside of the lab, take copies and return the notebook to the lab immediately.

Some considerations for digital lab notebooks:

- > Software backup and retention
 - > *Remember that DOS based version of WordPerfect 2.0?*

- > Hardware specific data
 - > *Can you even run the old software on computers today?*
 - > *There are some techniques – virtual platforms, etc.*
- > Security issues
 - > *Protect identifiable human data.*
 - > *Fire, theft, other destruction concerns.*
- > Common sense is not always abundant.
- > Consider the organizational chart to the right as a starting point.

