



FROM THE RESEARCH BENCH

What is source verification? From claim to version of record

Source verification connects a citation to its identity, version, held text, locator, and permitted use. A DOI alone is not a claim check.

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Source verification is the chain that connects a citation to the identity, version, access path, held artifact, text integrity, evidence locator, and permitted use of a work. It separates discovery, retrieval, bibliographic identity, version of record, full-text receipt, extraction, quotation checking, and recheck. This article uses the local receipt discipline and Greenberg's bounded study of citation distortion to build a synthetic verification register with verified, incomplete, superseded, and text-layer failure states. The register and stop rules are author synthesis. They reduce ambiguity without claiming that a DOI proves the text, a receipt proves truth, or a verified source establishes causal validity or literature completeness.

Keywords: Source Verification · Citation Verification · Version of Record · Evidence Review · Reproducibility · Audit Trail

A source list can look complete while the evidence behind it is not. Two files may share a title but represent a working paper and a published article. A DOI may resolve while the local PDF is a different version. A page capture may be present while the relevant table is outside the saved text layer.

Source verification is the chain from a citation to the identity, version, held artifact, evidence locator, and permitted use of the work. It is a reproducibility control for sources, not a guarantee that the source is true.

The defensible evidence-review article owns the decision to stop when evidence is not strong enough. The claim-entailment article owns the sentence-to-source support test. This page owns the record that tells another reader which source and version were actually used.

What does source verification mean?

Treat each step as a separate event:

Table 1 What does source verification mean?

Step	Question	Evidence of completion
Discovery	Where did the work or page first appear?	Search or catalog lead with date
Retrieval	Could the cited object be obtained lawfully?	URL, DOI, repository path, or capture record
Identity	Is this the intended author, title, date, and work?	Bibliographic fields and identifier
Version	Is it published, accepted, working, corrected, or captured?	Version statement and publication record
Receipt	Do we hold the complete object in that version?	Local file, checksum, and register row
Evidence	Which passage, table, or result supports the claim?	Locator and bounded extract
Recheck	Could identity, access, or status have changed?	Recheck date and result

Table from this essay. Sources and interpretation are given in the article.

The word version does real work. A version of record is a named publication version, not a general synonym for “a PDF.” An accepted manuscript can be useful and still differ from the published text. A page capture can preserve a live page and still need a date and content check.

Does a DOI prove the source claim?

No. A DOI is valuable source identity evidence. It does not prove that the file beside it is the cited version, that the page range is correct, that a result appears in the work, or that the work supports the sentence written by the analyst. Those are separate checks.

Greenberg’s study of one biomedical citation network is a useful warning about why the distinction matters. He documents citation bias, amplification, and invention in that bounded network, including the conversion of a hypothesis into a statement presented as fact through citation alone (Greenberg, 2009). The finding is not a universal error rate. It is a reason to keep the source object and the claim object separate.

What does a verification register look like?

The following rows are synthetic. They show source-control states, not a ranking of sources or a private bibliography.

Figure 1 The synthetic source-verification register

ID	Citation and identity	Version and receipt	Text and locator	Claim status	Recheck or disposition
S-01	Article, authors, year, DOI agree	Published version held; checksum recorded	Full text; results section located	Verified for bounded result	Recheck 2027-03-01
S-02	Title matches; author list incomplete	Accepted manuscript held	Methods text located; publication pages differ	Use only as accepted version	Find version of record
S-03	DOI resolves to intended article	Local file is a working paper	Abstract only; result not checked	Identity verified; claim open	Do not cite load-bearing result
S-04	Page title and retrieval date agree	Page capture held; source page changed later	Relevant paragraph preserved	Verified for dated page statement	Recheck if page is reused
S-05	Citation matches a retracted work	Retraction notice held	Original result located	Blocked for new claim	Record retraction and cut claim
S-06	PDF opens but text layer is empty	Artifact retained as page images	Locator requires image check	Incomplete text verification	Inspect page image before use

Author's synthetic source-verification register grounded in the local receipt protocol and Greenberg (2009). All citations, statuses, locators, and dates are illustrative.

S-03 is the most common trap: identity can be correct while the claim remains open. S-05 shows why a source can be a real publication and still be blocked for new use. S-06 shows why a file’s existence is not evidence that its text has been checked.

Which verification failures need different responses?

- Identity failure: resolve the intended work before extracting claims.

- Version failure: label the held version and do not silently cite a different one.
- Receipt failure: mark the source part-only or none; do not upgrade it from an abstract.
- Locator failure: find the exact passage, table, or page before the claim is load-bearing.
- Status failure: check retraction, correction, and supersession before reuse.
- Text-layer failure: inspect page images or obtain a usable text layer; a failed grep is not a source contradiction.

The response is not always “find another citation.” Sometimes it is to narrow the claim, preserve the source as provenance only, or record that the question is unresolved.

How should a team verify a source before publishing?

- 1 Write the intended citation and the exact version in the source register.
- 2 Resolve identity through DOI, URL, repository, or publication record.
- 3 Preserve the held artifact and record its retrieval date and checksum where available.
- 4 Confirm that the held version matches the version named in the article.
- 5 Extract the relevant passage and record a page, section, table, or dated-page locator.
- 6 Run the claim-entailment test on the sentence that will cite it.
- 7 Check retraction, correction, access, and text integrity before the release gate.

The final status should be explicit: verified for this claim, verified only for identity, incomplete, superseded, blocked, or not held. Source verification makes a citation reproducible. It does not make a proposition true, a model causal, or a literature search complete.

REFERENCES

Greenberg, S. A. (2009). How citation distortions create unfounded authority: analysis of a citation network. *BMJ*, 339, b2680.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.b2680>

END OF ESSAY

HOW TO CITE THIS ESSAY

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