Found yourself in a referencing rut? Here are your best options…

Are you getting the best out of your referencing software? **Ellie Harries** *tackles Mendeley, Zotero and EndNote in a browse at the choices available for those who find themselves stuck in a referencing rut.*

Referencing is an essential feature of all academic research and rapid technological advances have contributed to the proliferation of programmes which can help researchers systematically manage their references. Referencing software allows researchers to build up personal libraries of articles, notes and citations and some tools even allow you to share papers and notes with colleagues. While all this is great, there so many options available that it can be hard to know where to begin. To help you make the right choice, this blog provides a short overview of three key reference management tools out there.

Mendeley

Mendeley is an advanced research management tool which is favoured by some for its use of social networking features. Academics can share resources with colleagues through group libraries or upload a profile and find researchers with similar interests. As well as a desktop application, Mendeley stores academic libraries online, allowing researchers to access their papers and notes from any location. The desktop application contains powerful search functionality and lets researchers keep their citations, papers and references in one organised place on their hard-drive. Getting set-up on Mendeley is pretty straightforward: It only takes a few clicks to upload data and papers and the programme scans documents for metadata and automatically indexes key information like the name of the author and title of the article. It is also possible to import information held in other reference management tools, like Endnote and Zotero. Each user is allowed up to 1GB storage for a free account and Apple fans will find their iPhone and iPad apps very user-friendly.

Mendeley's key features:

- Papers can be accessed from anywhere online
- The tool automatically generates bibliographies
- Easy process to import research libraries from other software
- Powerful metadata scanner, which automatically pulls key information from uploaded articles, such as author, title and journal name
- PDF's can be annotated and highlighted
- Can be installed on an unlimited number of personal computers
- An iPhone and iPad app makes it easy for you to access their libraries on the move
- Compatible with Microsoft Word, but requires a plug-in
- 1GB storage for a free account

Zotero

Zotero is an add-in that works in the Firefox web-browser. It allows you to collect, organise and cite research sources. At the most basic level, Zotero is a citation manager, and citations can be collected and stored as you roam the internet. Like Mendeley, Zotero can index everything from books and articles to web pages, films and statues. Items saved in Zotero can be assigned tags, and the tool contains search functionality. Items can also have notes,

links and files attached to them. From the console, Zoltero users can create collaborative groups with shared libraries, making it possible to share research sources and material. Each Zotero user is allocated 100MB of storage, and there are a range of options to upgrade: 1GB storage costs $20 per year, and 5GB costs $60.

Zotero's key features:

- An online system that works in your browser
- Content can be saved to a library in a single click
- Research materials can be shared with colleagues using online group libraries
- Items can be tagged and can have notes, files and links attached to them
- Can be used to generate automatic bibliographies
- Compatible with Microsoft Word, but requires a plug-in
- 100MB storage for a free account

EndNote

EndNote is the old reliable of the referencing tool world. Like Mendeley, EndNote allows users to annotate PDF's and to store, organise and format references in a personal library. EndNote works with Microsoft Word's 'Cite While You Write' feature and can add bibliographies to documents, formatted in a range of styles. Version X6 includes EndNoteSync, allowing you to access research materials from anywhere and manage libraries from different computers. A recently released alternative, EndNote Web (free but with limited functionality) can be accessed online. Personal EndNote licences cost around £70 and include up to 5GB of storage

EndNote's key features:

- Software which allows researchers to manage, search and organise references
- Data can be imported from other bibliographic databases and Google Scholar
- Compatible with Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Word's 'Cite While You Write' feature allows you to add and format bibliographies
- EndNote Web recently released – a free alternative with slightly less functionality
- EndNote costs around £70 per year, allowing you 5GB storage.

Tool	EndNote X6	Mendeley	Zotero	EndNote Web
Price	Many universities have institutional licences. Personal licences cost around £70.	Free for basic account. Can upgrade for more storage.	Free for basic account. Can upgrade for more storage.	Free. Often packaged with university EndNote licence.
Works with Word	Yes.	Yes – but requires plug in.	Yes – but requires plug in.	Yes – but requires plug in.
Different styles of bibliographies	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.
Sharing functionality	Has a group function but can't share PDFs.	Yes.	Yes.	Has a group function but can't share PDFs.
Web based	No.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.
Basic storage capacity	Up to 5GB.	Up to 1GB.	Up to 100MB.	Up to 5GB.

Comparison of tools

Other tools
While Mendeley, Zotero and EndNote are the common favourites, we would love to hear from readers who use other systems like Delicious, Diigo, Coontea, CiteULike, or BibSonomy. What works best for you?

Note: This article gives the views of the author(s), and not the position of the Impact of Social Sciences blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

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