

Automating Citations: Which Tool Is Best?

Welcome to this video on citation tools. These tools can save you a lot of time but there are many out there. I will look at two of the tools that the library supports: Zotero, and Mendeley. Each of them is web-based, so you can log into them from any internet-connected device. Which of these tools is best? I will look at the highlights of each one, so you can decide which tool is suited to your needs.

Both Zotero and Mendeley have great features. If you use more than one device, you will find these web-based tools much handier than ones that are tied to a single computer. Plus, unlike tools for a single computer, these two are free, at least for the main features. Each system is fully integrated with Word to make citing easy. And each has a convenient bookmarklet that works with websites. For library support of these tools, select the "service" tab and "manage citations." This page includes links to the citation tools and an overview of each one.

Let's start with Zotero. It is a Firefox extension that works quite differently than Mendeley. Once you have downloaded it, it lives in your browser and everything can be done in a single screen. Although there is a standalone version for other browsers, the Firefox extension works best as an all-in-one-screen tool.

After you open an account, the Z icon lives in your Firefox browser. Clicking on it, will pull up your Zotero citations. You can organize them by title, creator, year, or other fields that you can select. On the right side of the screen, are the bibliographic details for each citation. You can also add notes and tags here. If you want to share your files, you can add collaborators. By clicking on the left side, you can access your folders, and search your tags. How do you get your citations into Zotero? You can manually add them, but there are more time-saving ways. If you know the DOI of an article or the ISBN of a book, you can enter it, and the bibliographic details will automatically be extracted. Easiest of all, you can search from the URL bar. In this example, I am searching in our catalogue. Zotero has detected a number of resources. You know this because a folder icon has appeared in the URL bar. Clicking on this folder will pull up a list of the resources on this page. Choose the ones you want, and click Ok to add them.

To create a bibliography, select your references, right click, and choose "create bibliography." For complete citations, download the Word plug-in from the settings.

What people like most about Zotero is the convenience of everything in one screen. Zotero provides numerous ways of organizing your citations and a handy way of exporting them from the URL bar or the DOI or ISBN number. Unlike Mendeley, it can export books from the library catalogue. In addition, you can easily share your citations with others. But if you want to store your PDF articles, you only get 300 MB of storage for free.

Now let's turn to Mendeley. You can access it through the Mendeley website or the citations page on the library site. If you click on papers, you can search a huge repository of articles. You can choose a discipline and sub-discipline, and search for the most popular or the most recent articles. To sign up for a Mendeley account, click on the first tab, fill in the information, and download the Mendeley desktop. This easy-to-use interface is one of Mendeley's most attractive features. Like Zotero, it has three main sections. Citations can be organized by author, title, year, publisher, date added, or other custom fields. They can also be grouped in folders or sorted by tags that you can add. From this interface, you can search the entire Mendeley library or your own citations, even for words within your articles. To read an article, double click on it and it will open in another tab. If you want to use Mendeley as an all-in-one research tool, you can do everything within it, including highlighting articles and adding notes to them.

Let's return to our citations page. How do you get citations into your library? You can add PDFs or an entire folder of PDFs that you have already downloaded on your computer. You can also open the folder where you want your article to go and simply drag the PDF into it. The bibliographic data will automatically be extracted from it. Make sure, however, that you proofread this data to make sure it is correct and complete.

To create a bibliography, highlight your references, right click, and choose "copy as" and then "formatted citation." Or download the Word plug-in from "tools."

Many people find that Mendeley works best with their workflow. It can be used as your library of articles and can act as your entire research management system. Mendeley gives you 2 GB of free storage. The interface is easy-to-use and organize. You can search Mendeley's huge repository for the latest and most popular articles in your area. On the downside, Mendeley charges extra if you want to collaborate with more than two people. And it will not import books from our library catalogue, but if you visit the extensive WorldCat library, you can find and import the books you need. You can find WorldCat at www.worldcat.org

I have mentioned the Word plug-in with both products. To see how they work, watch the tutorial, "How to use Word to automate citations," found at library.wlu.ca/help/tutorials. If you have any questions, just email us at libcitations@wlu.ca.