

Citation Management

By Abigail Goben and Rebecca Raszewski

Citation management tools, such as EndNote or Refworks, can do more than just track citations and create a bibliography. For a faculty member providing an evolving reading list throughout a semester course, students creating a group project bibliography, or researchers seeking to promote their work and identify future partners, identifying collaborative needs can help users to choose the appropriate software both for citation management and interactive opportunities. This article will compare four common software programs which have a broad group of shared features and identify collaboration strengths and weaknesses to help UIC community members best select an appropriate software.

For the purposes of this comparison, four frequently used citation management software programs were considered: RefWorks, EndNote, Mendeley, and Zotero. Common features expected from all of the software considered included both the use of Windows or OS X software, sorting citations into project folders, available plug in for MS Word allowing citation management while writing, bibliography creation outside of writing a document, and storing files within the software. There were some non-collaborative variations identified (e.g. not all software had a bookmarklet feature to collect citations from the web or could scrape metadata from uploaded documents), however it was felt that overall the software was similar enough for collaboration feature comparison.

Collaborative features were defined as those which would facilitate or inhibit use of the software by multiple users. Aspects under consideration included costs, mobile access, ability to share with partners outside the UIC community, ability to provide group access privately or publicly and/or editable, sharing beyond the software to other social media, and opportunities to discuss and discover within the software itself. No one software had all of the features identified as desirable to facilitating collaboration. For clarity, Table 1 shows a direct comparison between the programs for each feature.

Table 1: Collaboration Features of Four Citation Management Programs

Collaboration Feature	RefWorks	EndNote	Mendeley	Zotero
Does it cost to use?	Free for UIC faculty, staff, and students through library	Individual Subscription (available through UIC Webstore)	Free	Free
Can I use it to work with researchers at other institutions?	No* *Unless they also have a RefWorks subscription	Yes	Yes	Yes
Can I use it on my tablet or phone?	Yes—mobile website	Maybe—iOS app only	Maybe—iOS app only	Yes—iOS and Android
Can I import a saved search?	Yes	No	Yes	No
Can I share my folders publicly?	Yes (Private Group or Read Only)	Yes (Private Group or Read Only)	Yes (Public , Private Groups, Read Only)	Yes (Public , Private Groups, Read Only)
Can I make notes on citations?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Can I share to a social network?	Facebook, Twitter, RSS	No	Twitter, RSS	RSS
Can I use the software to find new collaborators?	No	No	Yes	Yes

Because each program has different strengths, one tool isn't recommended to meet all needs. In general, the librarians identified the following suggested adoption:

- RefWorks is best for students and groups at UIC, allowing for easy sharing of folders for group work and the Write-n-Cite tool to make bibliographies very easy. Free access for alumni prevents loss of research following graduation.
- EndNote provides a powerful tool for individual users but has the least amount of collaborative ability. While some sharing can be done through the EndNote web feature, the desktop focus of this software is targeted at the sole user. Because of the cost to purchase and then later update, users may also run into issues when working with collaborators with different versions.

- Zotero is a great tool for researchers who have multiple computers, though it is limited in working best with the Mozilla Firefox browser. This tool was identified as having the most robust screen-scraping capabilities, making it easier for those who are citing websites and documents in PDF formats. Constant community updates and the ability to contribute to the tool provides further collaboration opportunities with other users.
- Mendeley's biggest strengths were promoting one own work to the community and discovering future research partners. While it had the most limitations in custom fields and citation styles, future improvements may make this a full research platform for those working in groups across locations.

Do you still have questions about which tool might work best for you and your team? Librarians at the Library of the Health Sciences offer several options to learn more:

- Schedule an [appointment](#). Librarians can meet with you in person or online.
- [Customize a class](#) for your class, department, or research team. These classes can be taught in person or online.
- [Contact the library](#) in person, over the phone, or on IM if you need assistance.

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