PRODUCT REVIEW / ANALYSE DE PRODUITS

Product: Mendeley

URL: http://www.mendeley.com/
Audience: Faculty, staff, students
Purpose: Reference management
Contents: 32 million + cataloged papers
Updates: As needed
Compatibility: Windows, Mac OS, Linux, iOS, Android operating systems
Price: Individual subscription: Basic account- free, Premium packages- USD$4.99–$9.99/month; Institutional subscription: Mendeley Institutional Edition available.

Description

Whether writing a paper, dissertation, or manuscript, or simply organizing research of interest in your field, citation management products have become an essential tool to facilitate the process. Over the past few years, newer types of citation management products have evolved which function primarily in a web-based environment. These newer products are attractive because their online availability makes them more amenable to user productivity.

Mendeley is an example of a "next generation" citation management product. The developers of the London-based company Mendeley Ltd. had hopes of "automating literature management and sharing" when they rolled out Mendeley in 2008. Currently, there are over 1.3 million users, 32 million catalogued papers, and 33 613 public groups in Mendeley. Customer support is available through a support contact form, blog, feedback forum with development status updates, excellent outreach service, webinars, and video tutorials.

Access

Access to the product is convenient with the availability of a web-based version and a downloadable desktop client supplemented by an option to synchronize both. Organization of citations in the database is by a folder system that includes folders and groups. Groups are similar to folders but provide the option to share citation collections with invited individuals or with the public. The groups feature would be extremely useful for users working on collaborative projects.

Pricing

A basic Mendeley account is free and provides a limit of 1GB of space. This is available as 500 MB of personal and 500 MB of shared space, and includes five private groups, each with maximum of 10 users. There are several upgrade options available for purchase.

Compatibility

Mendeley is compatible with a variety of operating systems including Mac OS, Windows, and Linux. The word processor plug-in is compatible with Word, Mac Word, OpenOffice, BibTeX, and GoogleDocs. Finally, the Web Importer is compatible with a variety of browsers. Mobile applications are available in some form for both iOS and Android operating systems. However, the iOS app is limited, and Android app development has been left to third-party developers resulting in the production of several apps with varying levels of functionality.

Features

There are various search options available to aid in navigation through the collection of citations. Both platforms provide a section called "Filter by" that allows users to filter by record content such as tags, authors, and publication titles. Multiple tags can be assigned to citation records by user manual entry. A welcome feature in managing tags is the option to synchronize mistyped or variant tag names from within the "Filter by" section simply by dragging and dropping them. The default search in Mendeley is to search all metadata fields including any full text of articles in the desktop version, and solely the metadata fields in the web-based version. Advanced search features include the capability to limit to specific fields and the acceptance of quotation marks for phrase searching and whole-word searching.

A Web importer plug-in is available for browsers. The web importer recognizes bibliographic data from a number of databases and sites and permits import with a single click. Batch importing is not yet available with this feature, which means clicking and importing one by one. If a PDF is freely available online it will automatically import along with the citation data. While the web importer is convenient, users should check imported content for accuracy and completeness. A small but growing list of compatible sites is provided in the Getting Started Guide, which is available on the Mendeley Web site and desktop platform.

PDF management is one of the highlights of Mendeley. There is an integrated PDF viewer supplemented by an annotator that permits highlighting of text and adding

notes to PDFs. The annotated PDFs can be shared as well as exported. Furthermore, PDFs can be instantly renamed to a more consistent file naming convention using the File Organizer tool.

Mendeley's networking capability is unparalleled by any other citation management software product. After creating an online account, users may invite contacts from a list of registered users. What is really exciting about this networking is its application as a discovery tool and the potential to function as a networking tool to identify collaborators. Public groups of Mendeley members with shared interests can be created along with a relevant collection of citations. Also, depending on what settings are selected, users can get updates on what their contacts are publishing and reading.

Additional noteworthy features include the option for duplicate detection, a plug-in for use with word processors to cite and generate bibliographies, "watched folders" to automatically import new PDFs from an external folder, and automatic import of updated data in Zotero and CiteULike.

Usability

Mendeley deserves high marks for usability in workflow integration. Having tried the web and desktop versions in a Windows environment, I can say that the dual-access set up appears to work seamlessly. The syncing is effortless. Adding citations can be accomplished through a number of ways that facilitate workflow. These methods include upload of standard files such as RIS, manual entry, use of the Web Importer, and metadata extraction from 'drag and drop' or imported PDF files. In the web-based version,

users have access to citations used by other Mendeley members, and these can instantly be added to a collection with a click of a button. Furthermore, specifying institution details in the account settings may provide full-text retrieval depending on institution subscriptions.

Limitations

As with many other citation management products, there are a few drawbacks. Some examples include the Web Importer, the limited number of document types for references, the limited import file types, and the non-intuitive means to customize citation styles for the word-processor plug-ins. Finally, mobile product access, although available, is limited.

Despite these limitations, Mendeley shines in its networking capability, collaborative-friendly platform, smooth workflow integration, and the availability to aggregate and track academic trends in readership. It's a good choice for both students and professionals with citation collections of small to medium size or projects of smaller magnitude, who are looking for an easy to use, widely accessible product.

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