Mendeley

London, EC1R 5DF, United Kingdom, http://www.mendeley.com. Price: free basic service, premium packages available.

Reviewed by Eugene Barsky, Science and Engineering Librarian, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia
eugene.barsky@ubc.ca

Imagine the all-familiar scenario. A graduate student comes to you and says that she has a load of articles in PDF format forwarded by her supervisor and lab-coworkers. She asks whether she can use RefWorks or EndNote to bunch-load these articles. If your institution subscribes to RefWorks or EndNote, your answer is usually: "No, I am sorry, you have to re-find each of these citations and upload them to the bibliographic software." Well, not anymore. Meet Mendeley, a new web service that allows academics to organize their research free-of-charge online (for now, at least) and store documents in PDF format.

With a name sounding like the great Russian chemist - Dmitri Ivanovich Mendeleev who is credited as being the creator of the first version of the periodic table of elements (Gordin 2004) or maybe Mendele Mocher Sforim (Mendele the book peddler,), one of my favorite authors and one of the founders of modern Yiddish and Hebrew literature (Steinberg 1977), Mendeley can extract metadata, full-text and cited references from the actual papers in PDF format, so it is an ultimate answer for a student with a pack of electronic PDF articles handed to her by her supervisor.

Mendeley was born in 2008, with an idea of helping researchers organize their work locally on a freely-downloaded client that is easy to use (Mendeley 2010). Mendeley also intends to facilitate social networking, collaboration and sharing information within research networks (Giustini 2010; Reiswig 2010). The information can be synchronized with your account on Mendeley website, allowing access to your library from anywhere.

Documents that you choose to download could be tagged, and organized into collections; PDFs can be annotated in a very easy way, easier than any other citation products I am familiar with. Mendeley can also monitor a given folder on your computer and automatically import any new PDFs saved in that location. Plug-ins for MS Word and OpenOffice allow users to insert and format in a variety of citation styles. A plug in for Open Office is a unique feature, and is still a bit buggy as I couldn't get it to work with my netbook. Collections can be shared in two ways: 1) Free shared collections can include citations as well as PDFs and can be shared with up to ten individuals (copyright issues alert!); 2) Public collections are reading lists and do not contain full-text files, resembling RefWorks shared folders. Documentation for the software is very good and includes a "getting started guide", a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section, and a support forum where new features are proposed and discussed (Reiswig 2010).

Since most of us are familiar with the way bibliographic software functions, rather that describing how Mendeley works, I summarize the major differences between Mendeley, RefWorks, Zotero and EndNote in the table below:

Name	RefWorks	Mendeley	Zotero	EndNote *
Who is behind it	RefWorks is a business unit of ProQuest - http://www.proquest.com/	Private company - http://www.mendeley.com/	Center for History and New Media of George Mason University - http://www.zotero.org/	Thomson Reuters - http://www.endnoteweb.com/
Cost	Negotiated with ProQuest, more than $20,000 for a large university	Free for basic version.	Free – with Firefox plug-in	$249.95 for a private copy
Word processing integration	Write-n-Cite for MS Word	MS Word and Open Office	MS Word and Open Office	MS Word
Metadata extraction	No	Yes	No	No
Citing from the Web	Yes, with a plug-in – RefGrab-It	Yes, with a plug-in - Web Importer	Yes	No
Sharing	Yes, no full text	Yes, some full text	No	No

Storage	3GB	500MB for basic account	100MB	Storage on your computer
Duplicates elimination	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Direct export from databases	Yes, for most	Yes, for most	Yes, for most	Yes
Interoperability with other citation tools	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ease of use	Average	Easy	Easy	Average

* Only the full stand alone version of EndNote was reviewed. The author is aware of the scaled-down version of EndNote Web.

In my personal opinion, Mendeley enters a very crowded marketplace of bibliographic citation tools, with new tools emerging constantly - 2Collab.com, ScrapBook, Cite-U-Like, WizFolio, Connotea and a few more. Today, the major advantages of Mendeley are the ability to extract metadata from PDF files and integrate itself into OpenOffice software, something that other bibliographic tools haven't achieved yet. The major disadvantage is that it is a private company and it may disappear from the marketplace tomorrow.

References:

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