



GETTING ORGANISED DIGITALLY

As Nadine Bailey nears the end of studying for her Masters in Information Studies, she's sharing three digital tools she wishes she'd known about a long time ago.

My favourite digital management tools cover file management, referencing and word processing.

Remember that sinking feeling when you know you've read something crucial for an assignment or paper but you can't for the life of you remember where, Google's not helping, it's nowhere in your bookmarks and you don't have time to work through that pile of readings on your desk?

Consider using a digital file management system. The main contenders in this field are Evernote, Springpad, OneNote and GoogleKeep. Each has their strengths and weaknesses, so it's worth doing a little comparative research before settling on one. For my research and study purposes (and personal life) I have found Evernote (premium version) the most effective.

As soon as the subject material is released I get to work. First I download the subject outline and the available modules and file them under the course name. Then I hit my online library's federated search and download a PDF version of all the readings I will need for the semester, either articles or book chapters.

These are then tagged and dragged into the relevant digital notebook. Using the program's clipper on your web browser you can also file the whole article on a blog or webpage. I go through the same process for articles I've found for any assignments.

*LEFT: Nadine Bailey:
Being organised upfront saves time.*

When you sit down to work, you now have everything at your fingertips at all times, and you can sync your material to be available offline on your mobile device as well. The handy search function means you can search all material you've saved for any specific term or phrase very easily – which becomes very useful as you add to your collection of knowledge.

There are also many contenders for the referencing tool in your life, including Zotero, EndNote, ProCite, RefWorks, Bibtex, EasyBib and Reference Manager. Choose one based on your needs and budget and learn to use it well. I chose Zotero as it's free and flexible, and is integrated into most word processing software and web browsers.

As soon as I access material in journals, books or online I use the digital object identifier (DOI), ISBN or automatic citation tool of the database, type it in manually (last resort), or clip it using a browser tool.

When in doubt, I consult the very user-friendly APA style blog (blog.apastyle.org) where, if you don't find what you want, a very nice real live person will answer any email you send them within 48 hours!

I have found it is important to be consistent, and doing all this back office work upfront saves a huge amount of time later.

As far as printing is concerned, I only print the minimal – in my case my study modules. As I work through the reading – usually on my iPad – I make (physical) notes – often in brightly coloured pens. You can make digital notes, or even scan your notes and file them, but I find hands-on note taking helps me organise my thoughts, activate my brain, and stops me from falling asleep.

It is also well worth a couple of hours to find out how to really use your word processing tool. Here are a few of the functions that will save you a lot of time and sweat: using styles to ensure your document is consistent in look and feel, using the table of contents function to easily and simply generate (and update) your table of contents, and using the outline view to easily jump around a long and cumbersome document. Integrating your referencing program means you can also easily and correctly insert in-text citations and automatically generate a bibliography at the end.

My standard operating procedure now goes like this: access an article, save the PDF version in the file manager, document the reference in the reference program, make notes physically or digitally, type up the paper, correctly referenced using as many automatic functions in the word processor as possible, and use all the time I've freed up to write something profound and meaningful that will impress my professors!

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