

Creating a Personal Library

Why create a personal library?

It can be stressful to organize large amounts of information. Locating what you are searching for becomes a challenge, especially since many downloaded documents do not follow standard naming conventions. Citation management software can solve many of the struggles associated with storing and retrieving information electronically.

Personal libraries are:

Searchable. These software programs allow you to organize most types of information in a single, searchable place.

Consistent. Citation management software stores all the important citation information such as title, author, year, publication, etc. Full-text documents are attached to their corresponding citation.

Organized. Your citations can be filed and sorted through a variety of means to best capture your personal workflow.

Timesaving. Citation management software allows you to easily add citations to manuscripts in hundreds of citation styles (e.g. APA 6th, AMA, Chicago) and creates and updates bibliographies as you write and edit.

Portable. Most citation software syncs to the cloud so that your library can be accessed from anywhere.

Editable. Once a document is in your personal library, you can annotate it and highlight it just as you would a print document.

Shareable. Most citation software allows you to share some, or all, of your library with colleagues and collaborators.

What to consider adding to your personal library

Below are examples of types of documents you can add to your personal library. This is not an exhaustive list, and not all software programs can hold all types of files.

Document Type	Why add to your personal library
PDFs already on your computer	If you already have them saved on your computer, most likely they are of interest or importance to you. Make them easy to locate and edit by saving them all in one place.
Saved articles (collections) in databases	Most databases allow you to save articles in your personal account. By adding these articles to your personal library, you only have to download the PDF once, not every time you need it.
Electronic textbook chapters	Electronic book/chapter citations (such as those in AccessMedicine) can easily be exported into your personal library. In many cases, you can even attach the full text of the chapter.
Citations from other citation software	If you have used other citation management software in the past, there's no need to deal with multiple software programs. Transferring citations and documents from one software program to another is a simple and streamlined process.
Unpublished and published manuscripts	Your manuscripts can find a home in your personal library. Once they are there, you can cite them in other manuscripts.
Datasets	Saving datasets to your personal library makes them easy to locate and cite, including in manuscripts and grant applications.
Patents	Saving your patents in your personal library is a great way to organize them for easy access and citation.
Conference Paper/Poster	Keep all of your professional activities in one place.
Websites	Some citation management programs allow you to archive a webpage, preventing a loss of information if that webpage disappears or changes.
Reports (e.g. WHO, ACOG)	Reports can often be hard to find since they are on the web and can be updated, changed, or removed. Saving these reports to your personal library ensures that you will have them when you need them.
Theses	Whether it's your own or someone else's, theses can easily be saved in your personal library. Dissertation databases make exporting the citation a breeze.
Newspaper Articles	Save important newspaper articles (either as PDF, HTML, or Word documents) so you can find them when you need them.