Review of Zotero

http://www.zotero.org/ Accessed 14 March 2013

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Developed by the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, Zotero is a free browser-based tool designed to collect, organize, cite, share, and sync research materials. This review evaluates Zotero using the three notions of linked data discussed by John Voss in his plenary address at 2012 Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists.

Zotero enables users to create and curate libraries of research sources. The program "senses" research content from the web, allowing users to easily add sources from a variety of websites, library catalogs, and databases. At the same time, Zotero captures metadata for these sources to increase the discoverability and connectivity of the content, and so users may generate citations. Users have the option of adding PDF documents, images, audio, video, screenshots of webpages, and notes to the source's record. The sources may also be organized by collections or sorted through the addition of tags. Additionally, the ability to collaborate with others in a Zotero group is an important attribute of the tool. Members of a group may create a shared library, add notes, share documents, compile notes, and participate in discussions. Thus, Zotero shows the story of how individual users, groups, and content are connected in an easy-to-use interface.

Zotero succeeds in creating an archival content community through the use of nodes and links. Nodes in Zotero are users or groups, citations, attachments, user-generated notes, and discussion threads. These nodes link to each other through a variety of ways. For example, a discussion thread connects to a group and the group connects to a collection of research sources. Zotero has more options for sharing and collaboration than other citation management tools such as RefWorks, increasing Zotero's viability as an archival content community.

In his address, Voss also introduced the notion of "Archivist as DJ," those who create mashups of content, providing a new, cohesive experience for researchers. In a sense, Zotero allows users to act as a DJ as sources may be sorted into collections and subcollections or organized via the addition of tags. However, Zotero falls short of creating a robust mashup experience, as users cannot manipulate various sources within the program to create a new product as imagined in Voss's plenary address.

Zotero Commons is a newer addition to the Zotero platform that also contributes to this notion of an archival content community. Zotero Commons is a partnership with the Internet Archive's Scholar Work Spaces initiative. Users of the two sites are given the opportunity to back up and share scanned, public domain, primary source documents with the world. Once added to the Internet Archive through Zotero Commons, the documents are OCRed. These personal digitization projects allow researchers to play the role of archivist by contributing to the body of unique information available to users via Zotero Commons.

There are two versions of Zotero, a version for Firefox users and a standalone version that interacts with browsers through the use of a plug-in. Zotero for Firefox seems to operate more seamlessly, easily detecting research content on the web. The addition of the browser add-on *Readability*, however, makes it easier for Zotero to recognize research content when utilizing the standalone version of the software.[1] The citations generated by Zotero are only as good as the data that goes into the system so if using the tool for graded or professional writing, double-check the accuracy of the information generated.

Zotero is an easy to use, cloud-based citation management tool that incorporates Voss's three notions of linked data. Although traditionally used as a citation management tool, libraries and archives might envision Zotero as a platform for building digital collections in an interconnected world.

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[1] Amy Cavender, "Use Readability to Make Sites Zotero-Friendly," *ProfHacker*, May 5, 2011. http://chronicle.com/ blogs/profhacker/use-readability-to-make-sites-zotero-friendly/33015.
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