

Evernote<https://evernote.com/>*Reviewed by Eira Tansey, University of Cincinnati*

Evernote is an application intended to help people capture ideas and organize them for a wide variety of uses. Evernote's website describes the program as helping people "write, collect, find, and present" their work,¹ and is one of the most popular personal knowledge management tools on the market.² Users of Evernote create notes which can then be stored in a variety of customized notebooks. A note can include the following items: screenshots, PDFs, other file attachments, plain or formatted text, images, audio recordings, lists, and so on. Evernote can be used individually, semi-collaboratively (an individual user can choose to share certain notes and/or notebooks), or in a licensed business version that supports broader collaborative features.

This review will primarily focus on individual use of Evernote. Archivists will likely find the best use of Evernote to be in supporting their own research, writing, planning, and service activities—the platform itself is not suitable for working with born-digital archives in a repository's collections. This is because the Evernote platform does not contain any suitable long-term preservation functions, nor does it maintain all digital objects in their original state. That said, it is possible that in the future, archivists may be asked to preserve a donor's Evernote account as evidence of one's personal digital archives.

Evernote uses a "freemium" model for accounts.³ Free user accounts allow access to the majority of Evernote features, while paid accounts give users higher upload allowances, greater PDF annotation capabilities, presentation mode, and offline access to notes and notebooks.⁴ At the time of this writing, a premium account costs \$5 a month, or \$45 a year.

Evernote can be used with Mac and PC, and on a variety of mobile devices. There are currently no plans to create a client for Linux, however there are a number of

¹ "Evernote," accessed January 13, 2015, <https://evernote.com/products/>

² "How academics use Evernote to make life easier," last modified July 30, 2013, <http://www.academicpkm.org/2013/07/30/how-exactly-do-people-use-evernote-in-academia/>

³ "Freemium," last modified January 10, 2015, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freemium>

⁴ "Get Evernote Premium", accessed January 13, 2015, <https://evernote.com/premium/>

Evernote-like programs created by the Linux community. Evernote can also be accessed through a web interface. There are some style differences between the Mac and PC versions of Evernote, but these differences are minimal.

Evernote continually syncs content across the entire account, so even if you use Evernote in multiple locations (e.g., a PC at work, a Mac at home), you have continuous access to the most recent version of your work. Evernote supports versioning of notes, however if multiple authors have worked on previous versions, it does not currently show which author made version changes.

To create a note, users can start within the application itself, or create a note via a web clipper browser add-on, or send an email to their Evernote account, automatically creating a note. Most versions of the Evernote web clipper automatically suggest a notebook for organizing clipped notes.

Similar notebooks can be bundled together in “Stacks,” and individual notes can be tagged with user-created keywords. Text searches can be done within a note, notebook, or an entire Evernote account.

As previously stated, Evernote works best for brief bits of text or ideas. For longer-form writing, it has many limitations. Therefore, the best potential use for Evernote is for projects that require juggling a large number of ideas or references. An archivist who conducts research might have a notebook stack devoted to her broad array of research projects. One notebook in the stack might contain generic notes about her potential interests—for example a note containing ideas for future research, and another note tracking the progress of various projects. She might also maintain several notebooks to gather and annotate PDFs relevant to future literature reviews.

Archivists working on collaborative projects, papers, or presentations may find that Evernote is a useful place to organize and share their in-progress work. Notebooks can be shared with multiple people, and given various forms of access (read-only, read and write, read, write and administrative capabilities). For example, two archivists writing a co-authored article could have their own individual notebook to gather ideas and create outlines, and share viewing access with the other author. Alternatively, the authors could work in the same notebook. Since individuals can have their own Evernote accounts, this model would work with archivists from different institutions. Many professional uses of Evernote relevant to archivists can be found at ProfHacker⁵ and Personal Knowledge Management for Academia & Librarians.⁶

⁵ “ProfHacker,” accessed January 13, 2015, <http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/tag/evernote>

⁶ “Personal Knowledge Management for Academia & Librarians,” accessed January 13, 2015, <http://www.academicpkm.org/tag/evernote>

As previously mentioned, Evernote is not a tool archivists would use to manage digital archival objects. However, it is not out of the question that in the future, archivists may want to acquire and preserve a donor's Evernote account. Archivists should be aware of the limitations of exporting Evernote. Individual notes and notebooks can be exported as HTML or in an Evernote-specific format known as Evernote XML ('ENEX' is the file extension, 'ENML' refers to the markup language).⁷ The specifications of ENML are available and formally defined in a Document Type Definition (DTD).⁸ Notebooks and notes can be exported as a single HTML file, or with each note as an HTML file as part of a parent directory. Currently the best use for downloading .ENEX files is creating manual backups for Evernote accounts.

As archivists seek to expand their service, project management, or writing activities, Evernote can be a very useful personal tool for organizing ideas, thoughts, and resources. Its ease of use and freemium model has made it a very popular tool for personal knowledge management.

⁷ "Export, archive, and import Evernote notes," last modified November 24, 2014, <https://evernote.com/contact/support/kb/#!/article/28607737>

⁸ "ENML: Understanding the Evernote markup language," accessed January 13, 2015, <https://dev.evernote.com/doc/articles/enml.php> and "How Evernote's XML Export Format Works," accessed February 10, 2015, <https://blog.evernote.com/tech/2013/08/08/evernote-export-format-enex/>