

Mendeley: A free research management tool for desktop and web

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<http://www.mendeley.com>

The evolution of the World Wide Web from a largely static entity to the more dynamic Web 2.0, associated with the increasing use of blogs, wikis, and social networking technologies, has led to a number of innovative changes of immense use to academia. The backbone of these changes technically stem out of the use of “cloud computing” which combines the simplicity of using a web browser to access and meaningfully use the collective resources of the web. This has made it possible of not only retrieving online digital repositories but also adding to them in the form of metadata, personal notes and keywords (digital labels or tags) in order to help manage, navigate and share collections. Thus, digital libraries have been integrated, personalized and designed to lend themselves to be distributed among other users with similar interests.

Mendeley (www.mendeley.com) is a combination of a website



and a desktop application which helps manage, share and discover both content and contacts in research. The downloadable software “Mendeley Desktop” can be used for automatic extraction of document details (authors, title, journal etc.) from digital copies of academic papers into a database, which circumvents the chore of manual typing. A full-text search for all the papers in the personal database is available and can be filtered by authors, journals or keywords. The organization of papers can be fine tuned by the use of notes and tags and the document details can be exported in different citation styles. A self-assembled personal library can be shared with others and synchronized.

The website, Mendeley Web, complements the Mendeley Desktop by offering a number of web-based features. There is an online back up of the library which helps in storing and retrieval of the documents from just about anywhere through a browser. The popularity and detailed statistics of any publication can be tracked as the readership evolves in numbers. The frequency of the papers being downloaded and read, the type of people accessing the article and their geographic locations can also be traced. One can also follow the growth or decline of a research topic of interest and discover new papers and topics by an effortless asynchronous method which is analogous to social networking. A recommendation engine suggests relevant papers that are not in the personal library but could be added the repository.

Both, the Desktop and the Web interface, are intuitive and user friendly. PDF files of research papers can simply be “dragged and dropped” into a space on the webpage, which automatically extracts data, keywords, cited references thereby creating a searchable database and saving countless hours of work. The user can be discovered by anyone signed

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on to the site, thus leading to collaboration with researchers around the world.

Mendeley recognizes data from a wide variety of online article databases (including PubMed, ScienceDirect, CiteULike, Google Scholar, JSTOR). An additional downloadable browser plugin makes it easy to capture a citation, an abstract, or even a full length article.

There is much to be improved in Mendeley. It fails to recognize some papers in common formats; there is a limited space of 500 MB which might be insufficient for some of the more prolific authors. Text-mining is not supported and search capabilities

require some fine tuning.

Mendeley will be liked because of its innovative nature, a simple interface and intuitive usage. The results are amazingly instantaneous. The status of your research can be discovered in almost real time and one does not have to wait for a paper to be published in order to be cited. In the forthcoming years, Mendeley and similar applications will spearhead the new face of social networking for scientists and researchers working in all fields.

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