

TechMatters: Happily ‘Evernote’ After: Storing and Sharing Research in the Cloud

Krista Graham, Central Michigan University

As librarians, we spend a lot of time away from our offices gathering information to help us improve our skills and do our jobs better. We attend conferences, visit faculty development centers, take classes, and otherwise engage in all manner of continuing education. With so much information coming at us, a big challenge is to organize and keep track of it all. It doesn’t do much good if all that useful information is scattered amongst a variety of note pads, scraps of paper, Word documents, smartphone photos, and in any other number of unrelated locations and formats. Fortunately, there is a free software solution to help address this issue.

Evernote is a software application that will allow you and your students to capture, organize, and archive information in a variety of formats and from a variety of electronic devices. The information that you collect is stored “in the cloud” and then synced to your other Evernote enabled devices (e.g., desktop computer, tablet, or smartphone). All of your saved information is automatically indexed by the system, with the option for you to also add your own tags, so that it becomes easily searchable and retrievable. Add Evernote’s commitment to user privacy and data protection (see: <http://blog.evernote.com/2011/03/24/evernote%E2%80%99s-three-laws-of-data-protection/>), and you have one excellent research management tool for instruction librarians and students alike.

Creating an Account

In order to get started with Evernote, the first step is to create an account. The basic account is free and includes access to all basic versions of the software, note synchronization, an unlimited allowance for the number of notes (but with a limit of 60MB/month for file uploads), and the ability to add image, audio, video, Office and PDF files to your notes. A Premium version with added features including higher upload limits (1GB per month), priority tech support and faster image processing is also available for \$5 per month or \$45 per year.

To create your account, start from the Evernote home page (<http://www.evernote.com>) and follow the link in the top right corner of the screen to “Create Account”. All that you need to provide in order to register for a free account is an e-mail address, a username, and a password. After creating your account, you will be taken to the Evernote web interface where you will find a “Welcome Note” to help you get started creating and organizing your notes.

Installing the Software

The Evernote application is available for use on a variety of devices and platforms including PCs, Macs, and many mobile devices (e.g., iPhone, iPad, Android, BlackBerry).

When you visit the Evernote home page via a web browser for the first time on a device, the page automatically detects the type of device that you are using and offers the option to download the appropriate version of the software (see Figure 1). At that point, simply click on the download button and follow the setup instructions. Once installed, you sign in using your previously created user name and password to launch the application.

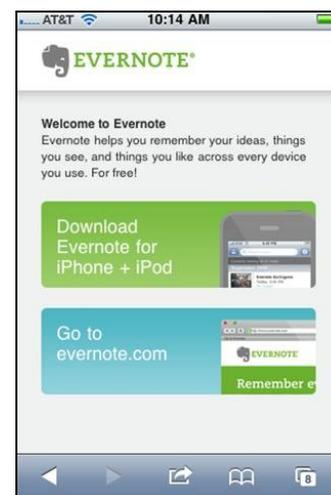


Figure 1:
Your browser will recognize your device and prompt you to download the correct version of the soft-

Getting Started

Evernote uses a simple “notebook” metaphor to help you organize information. A “note” is any single item that you create in Evernote. A note can be text, an image, an audio recording, a video, or any combination. A “notebook” is a collection of notes, much like a “folder” on your computer.

Take a Note

The most basic type of note that you can create is a text note. To do so, simply click on the “New Note” button on the main toolbar (see Figure 2). This will create a blank note template where you can give the note a title and type the content that you want to insert. Basic formatting tools (e.g., font size and style, text alignment, formatted lists) are available. In addition, you can tag your notes with key terms to help you search for and find them in the future.

Want to add an image to your note? Couldn’t be easier; just open a new or existing note, navigate to the location of the image you want to add (e.g., your desktop, a web page, etc.), click on the image, and then drag and drop it directly into the note in the location of your choice. Once this image is in Evernote, a great feature is that you are able to fully search any text in the images, making pictures much more searchable Dropbox folder.

Get Out the (Web) Clippers

To make it easier to save information that you find while surfing the Net, Evernote provides “web clipper” extensions

for the major browsers (i.e., Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, and Chrome). You will find them on the Web Clipper download page at http://www.evernote.com/about/download/web_clipper.php

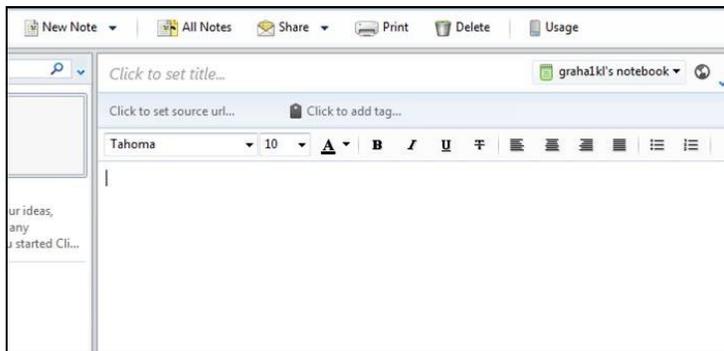


Figure 2: Create a new note

After the web clipper is installed, an Evernote icon will be added somewhere near the address bar in your browser; the exact location will vary slightly by browser.

Now, when you are browsing and see something that you want to save, all you need to do is highlight the text and hit the Evernote button. If you aren't already, you will be prompted to sign-in to Evernote, as well as to provide a title, optional tags, and select the notebook to which you want to add your note. The note will be added to Evernote, and you can continue browsing without the disruption of visiting a separate application.

More Notes and Ways to Add Them

Tweet a Note

Want to archive an interesting tweet in Evernote? In order to do so, all you need to do is follow @myEN from your Twitter account. Upon doing so, you will receive a direct message from myEN containing a URL that will take you to the Evernote login screen. Login and press the "Link accounts" button. Now, you can send tweets directly to Evernote either by including @myEN in any public tweet, or by direct messaging new notes to myEN.

Email a Note

Each Evernote account comes with its own email address. You can use this address to send and/or forward email messages to Evernote. The content of each message is automatically inserted into and saved in the form of a new note. You will find your Evernote e-mail located at the bottom of the "account summary" section of the "Settings" area of the application. Just grab a copy of your address, and add it as a contact in your email applications and you'll be all set to quickly and easily create new email-based notes.

Record a Voice Note

Audio notes can be very useful for capturing ideas and thoughts before they drift away. If you have the right equipment and software, you can record voice messages using your

computer and drag them into Evernote. However, a more convenient option exists for smartphone users who can use the mobile app to record and save voice notes directly into Evernote (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Record voice notes using your mobile phone

Create and Share Notebooks

Once you start creating notes, it is likely they will start to accumulate fairly quickly. To keep things organized, you can create notebooks in which to file your notes (see Figure 4).

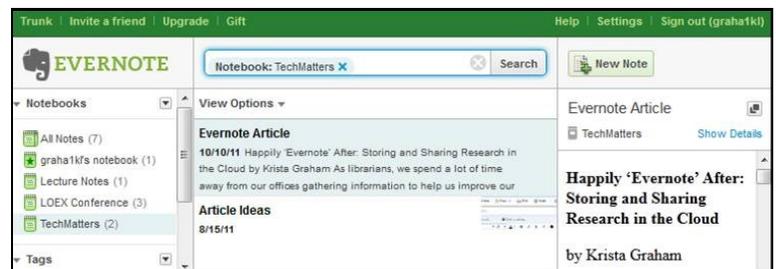


Figure 4: Notes (in the center column) are organized into notebooks (in the left-hand column)

These notebooks can then be shared with either selected individuals or the world. To do so, just hit the "Share" button, select "Share Notebooks ...", and choose the notebook you want to "Start sharing". This will bring up the "Shared Notebook Settings" screen (see Figure 5) where you can either create a public URL to share your notebook with the world, or designate and invite specific individuals to view your notebook. The ability to allow users to make modifications to material in your notebook is only available to premium subscribers.

Uses of Evernote

For Conference/Meeting-goers

Each Evernote can be a lifesaver during a large busy library conference where information is coming at you from a multitude of sessions and in a variety of formats. Just consider a typical day at the ACRL conference. You start out the morning attending an informative session on active learning and use your laptop to take notes. After the session, you have a question for the presenter and use your smartphone to make an audio recording of her response. You then head over to the poster sessions and take a few snapshots of a great poster

(Evernote...Continued on page 3)

by Denise's mulish hee-haw. Use wisdom in separating them"), so it's an enjoyable read rather than a hard slog (p. 194). I believe *Successful Classroom Management* should be read by every librarian who's just found out instruction is one of his/her duties, and ideally even by those who have been at it for ages. One of the things we learn as librarians and edu-

cators is that the best teachers are themselves constantly learning; this is just as valid for technique as it is for content.

References

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(*Evernote...Continued from page 7*)

describing a new learning activity you want to try out in your next class.

In the past, you would have had to remember where and on which devices you stored all of this information. Now, however, you can simply create an ACRL notebook in Evernote, add each document, recording, and photograph as you go, and add tags describing the content. When you return tired and happy from your conference experience you'll have everything you learned organized and searchable right at your fingertips.

Figure 5: Share your notebook with individuals or the world

For Instructors

Evernote can be used to collect interesting teaching ideas and/or relevant articles that you may encounter as you go about your daily work. By adding relevant tags, you can easily locate these items again when you start to develop your lesson plans. For that matter, you might choose to develop those plans right within Evernote. Consider creating a notebook for each of your topic areas and/or class sessions.

Another option is to use Evernote's sharing capabilities to provide your students with information that you create and/or collect for them. For example, you might want to share your lecture notes with the class and could do so by inviting your students to view a shared notebook containing those materials.

For Students

Evernote can serve as a highly effective research management tool for students. For those conducting research projects, they can use Evernote to collect and store the information that they discover throughout the research process. And, for those working in groups, they can share their individual notebooks with one another so that they can more easily track their overall progress. Additionally, if a student group is using a whiteboard to sketch out ideas, a picture can be taken at the end and archived for later viewing.

These are just a few ideas to get you started. Although it may take a false start or two before you get a sense of all the different ways to use this tool, I predict that you may be surprised with how quickly and dramatically it will change your workflow. Give it a try the next time you attend a conference or long meeting and see how well it helps you with organizing, and then later accessing, all your thoughts and the insights you gather from others. With a little exploration and experimentation you can probably think of a multitude of ways to put this versatile research management tool to work for you!

(*Mentoring Students...Continued from page 10*)

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