

## TechMatters: Browser Extensions and Add-ons for Library Instructors

Krista Graham, Georgia State University

As library instructors, we are always on the lookout for new technologies that can aid us in our efforts to improve our teaching and increase student learning. In the ongoing quest for the latest and greatest in educational technology, however, we can sometimes overlook the tools that we use on a daily basis, assuming there is nothing new to discover about them. For me, the web browser is one such technology. Recently, I was reminded of the power of browser extensions to expand the functionality of this simple tool that most of us use every day.

As a refresher, a browser extension/add-on is “a plug-in that extends the functionality of a web browser” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Browser\\_extension](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Browser_extension)). They can be used to add features, modify page content, and integrate with other applications or services. All of the major browsers including Chrome, Firefox, Microsoft Edge, Opera, and Safari allow the use of extensions and provide “stores” that you can use to find and install them (see “Where to Find Browser Extensions” list at the end of this article). Because Chrome is by far the most used browser with a worldwide market share hovering around 60% (<http://gs.statcounter.com/>), this tool’s extensions will be our focus. That said, extensions are often developed to work with a variety of browsers, and even if that is not the case for a particular extension, you are likely to find a comparable option designed for your browser of choice.

### Installing Extensions

Typically, installing an extension is as simple as pressing a button. If your extension is found in the Chrome web store, click the blue “+ ADD TO CHROME” button, and then select “Add extension” from the resulting dialog box. Alternately, if you discovered the extension while you were on the web site of another application, you will probably find an embedded button. Either way, the process is more or less the same and always fairly straightforward. Now that we’ve got the installation mechanics squared away, let’s explore a few extensions that can be particularly useful for library instructors.

### ScreenCastify

<https://www.screencastify.com/>

Instructional videos and tutorials are regularly created by librarians for use both online and in the classroom. Very often such videos include an on-screen demonstration of a search tool or web application. With the ScreenCastify extension you can easily initiate a screen capture session directly from within your Chrome browser.

Once you install the extension, an arrowhead-shaped video camera icon (  ) will appear on the toolbar to the right of the address bar. Navigate to a page that has content you want to record (e.g., a LibGuide you want to demo) and then click the ScreenCastify camera icon. If it is your first time using the tool, you will need to go through the quick setup process where you sign in to your Google account, set permissions to use your

camera/microphone and/or enable the drawing and animation tools (both are optional), and then answer a few high-level demographic questions (e.g., are you an Educator or a Corporate User; what is your education level).

ScreenCastify will give you the option to record your current browser tab, your entire desktop, or your web cam (provided you have one and have granted permission to use it). You can capture audio from either your microphone (again, provided you have one and have granted permission to use it) or the system audio or both. You can also embed your web cam if you want to appear in person within the video. You can use the drawing tools to mark up the video (e.g., circle a part of the screen you want to draw the viewer’s attention to) as it plays. Click the camera icon again to stop recording, and your video will be automatically saved to Google Drive.

With the free version of the tool, you are limited to 10-minute videos, can only create 50 videos per month, and videos will include the ScreenCastify logo. With the premium version (\$24/year) these restrictions are lifted, and you can also crop/trim videos, and export them as MP4s or animated GIFs.

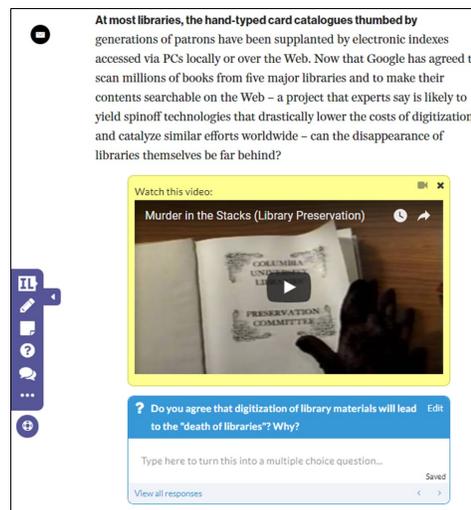
### InsertLearning

<https://insertlearning.com/>

InsertLearning is an extension that allows you to create and embed “interactive lessons” into any web page. When you first add the extension, you will be prompted to “Sign up with Google”, indicate whether you are a teacher or student, and—if you want—provide a name for your class.

When you open the extension by clicking on the IL icon (  ), a toolbar will appear on the left-hand side of the screen (see Figure 1). With these tools you can highlight important text, add a sticky note into which you can add comments and/or embed additional content such as YouTube videos, insert questions for students to answer, and/or add a discussion board.

**Figure 1: Use the InsertLearning toolbar to add content (such as the video and the question below).**



After creating a lesson, you need to share it with your students, which you do by assigning it to a class that you have created from within the “Teacher Dashboard.” Please note that in order for students to interact with your lessons, they will need to enroll in your class with a Google ID and class code (unless you use Google Classroom) and install the InsertLearning extension in their browser.

With the free version of InsertLearning you can create a maximum of five lessons that can be used with an unlimited number of students. In order to create unlimited assignments, an annual subscription (\$40/year) is required.

### Zotero Connector

<https://www.zotero.org/download/>

Many of us use, and/or teach our students to use, Zotero as a reference management tool. The Zotero Connector is a browser extension that can make your use of this tool more efficient as it can “automatically sense” and identify citation information as you browse the web and allow you or your students to save information directly into a Zotero account with the click of a button.

With the extension installed, you will notice an icon that will change depending on the type of content (e.g., article, web page, book, etc.). For example, if you are looking at a journal article, the icon will look like a tiny page from an article (📄). When you click the icon, any metadata that the extension can detect will be pulled down into Zotero where you can then review it, make any necessary changes or additions, append notes, and/or assign tags. If you are viewing a PDF, the button will change its appearance (📄) and when you click, it will download a copy into Zotero along with any metadata that it can detect.

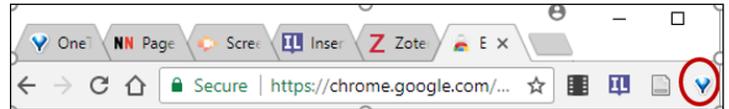
### OneTab

<https://www.one-tab.com/>

For anyone who engages in “parallel browsing” or “page parking” (see: <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/multi-tab-page-parking/>) strategies while conducting online research, this is an indispensable little tool. With a click of the funnel icon (see Figure 2), you can reduce a screen full of tabs down to a list of links on a single page (see Figure 3). As anyone who works with many tabs open knows, the problem is that they can start to eat up your computer’s resources and make it almost impossible to do any work.

OneTab allows you to reduce your open tabs down to a single page so that you can reclaim your computer’s processing power without losing all of your work. If you want to return to a page, you can do so by clicking on any one of the links which will open it in a new tab, or you can click on “restore all” to bring back your all of your tabs at once. Brilliant!

Even if you close your browser or turn your computer off, you can still retrieve all your previously open tabs; OneTab saves “tab groups” (you can even give them a name, e.g., “Library News Sites”) that you can access whenever you need them. You can add and remove sites from these groups at your convenience.



**Figure 2: Chrome browser with six open tabs ; click the funnel icon on the right to get a list of links on a single page.**



**Figure 3: Multiple tabs reduced to one page of links by OneTab.**

### Extensity

<http://sergiokas.github.io/Extensity/>

Although Chrome extensions can be incredibly useful, they can also significantly increase the load on your computer’s memory, and occasionally conflict with one another in ways that can destabilize your browser. One way to mitigate these issues is to disable extensions when you are not using them. This can always be done by navigating to “More tools -> Extensions” option on the Chrome menu (it will take you to `chrome://extensions/`); once on this page, you can toggle the extensions off and/or on. Note: You can also fully remove an extension using this menu.

Alternately, you can use Extensity to quickly enable/disable any of your installed extensions. To do so, just click on the two-tone icon (🔘) in your extension toolbar and then select the extension you want to disable—one click is all you need. Using the icons at the top of the Extensity menu, you can turn all extensions off/on at the same time, go directly to the extensions management screen or change how Extensity groups & displays the extensions. It’s as simple as that!

### Conclusion

The Chrome extensions described here represent only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the potential utility of these tools for students and instructors. Remember, extensions (aka add-ons) are available for all of the major browsers and you can find them by searching the “stores” listed below. Check them out and you are certain to find a variety of options to help you engage students, improve learning, and/or simply make it easier for you to get your work done!

(Multi-Framework...Continued from page 9)

practices. For one thing, instead of relying on attendee input, librarians could observe first-hand how participants satisfied their data and research needs and what struggles were encountered. Attendee input gathered in previous iterations of this workshop were more abstract, unclear, and less reliable as first-hand observation. The revised activities shed light on the nuances of the information creation and organization process and pointed to “threshold” areas more concretely. For example, when groups attempted to follow instructions for rebuilding objects, they quickly realized the importance of language taxonomies and the need for clarity and terminology consensus when working collaboratively. While similar points were concluded from discussions in previous workshops, the method used in the revised workshop provided tangible instances of the key talking points. In this case study, the ACRL Framework provided a good basis for lesson design, but the disciplinary context-focused framework helped with clarifying the lesson goals. That said, there were still challenges, such as addressing other ACRL frames directly due to time limitations and the narrow scope of the workshop.

As we move forward and produce more examples of multi-framework use for teaching information literacy, librarians should think about potential as well as limitations of various approaches. They might examine, for instance, the compatibility between framework models and ask which work well together and in what context: do multi-frameworks work well when teaching about information creation as when we teach searching as a strategic exploration? There’s certainly much work to be done when it comes to assessing learning with the ACRL Framework, so perhaps we can also consider whether or not multi-framework philosophies aid or complicate assessment.

---

(TechMatters...Continued from page 7)

## Where to find Browser Extensions

Chrome Web Store

<https://chrome.google.com/webstore?hl=en>

Firefox Add-ons

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/extensions/>

---

(Anticipatory Sets...Continued from page 5)

with students. If you are not feeling creative or are stuck, colleagues can be good spring boards for testing ideas or brainstorming possible scenarios. Consider starting with a basic anticipatory set if you want to experiment with them in your instruction. Once you are comfortable, scale up to an intermediate or advanced set. However you decide to start, this is an opportunity to have fun and explore new ways of making sure your instruction sessions are effective right from the start.

## References

- ACRL. (2000, January 18). Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. Retrieved from <http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=Home&template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=33553>
- ACRL. (2016, January 11). Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. Retrieved from [http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/issues/infolit/Framework\\_ILHE.pdf](http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/issues/infolit/Framework_ILHE.pdf)
- ACRLLog. (2015, January 30). What’s the Matter with Threshold Concepts? Retrieved from <http://acrlog.org/2015/01/30/whats-the-matter-with-threshold-concepts/>
- Bravender, P., McClure, H., & Schaub, G. (Eds.). (2015). *Teaching information literacy threshold concepts: Lesson plans for librarians*. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries.
- CARLI. (n.d.). ToolKit. Retrieved from <https://www.carli.illinois.edu/products-services/pub-serv/instruction/ToolkitHomepage>
- CUNY Academic Commons. (n.d.). Implementing ACRL’s New IL Framework: Practical Directions for Threshold Concepts | Information Literacy @ CUNY. Retrieved from <https://infolit.commons.gc.cuny.edu/lilac-events/spring15/framework/>
- Kuglitsch, R. Z. (2015). Teaching for transfer: Reconciling the Framework with disciplinary information literacy. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 15(3), 457–470.
- Maybee, C., & Zilinski, L. (2015). Data informed learning: A next phase data literacy framework for higher education. *ASIS&T Annual Meeting*, 52(1).
- Shinners-Kennedy, D., & Fincher, S. A. (2013). Identifying threshold concepts: From dead end to a new direction. In *Proceedings of the ninth annual international ACM conference on International computing education research - ICER '13* (p. 9). New York, New York, USA: ACM Press. doi:10.1145/2493394.2493396

Microsoft Store

<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/store/collections/edgeextensions/pc>

Opera Add-ons

<https://addons.opera.com/en/>

Safari Extensions

<https://safari-extensions.apple.com/?category=productivity>

## References

- Ambrose, S. A., Lovett, M., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., & Norman, M. K. (2010). How does students’ knowledge affect their learning? In *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching* (pp. 10-39). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Hunter, M. (1982). *Mastery teaching*. El Segundo, CA: TIP Publications.