ZOTERO IN THE CLASSROOM

Introducing Zotero and Ways to Reinforce

✓ Make it a required or optional software
✓ Mention it early in the course; Link to it EVERYWHERE
✓ Require use through specific assignments
✓ Zotero Library as a class resource
✓ Have one of our Zotero experts visit your classroom for a workshop/tutorial!
  (calendar.library.brandeis.edu → Request form link)

Zotero-based Assignments:

✓ Annotated Bibliography
✓ Required Component of Research Essay
✓ Growing Class Library/Resource
✓ Group Project – Create a public library around a specific topic with tags & notes
✓ (Have an idea? Let me know how it goes!)

Common Issues and some tips:

✓ End of Semester Crush: Learning a new program is a lot to ask of students at the end of the semester when most research papers are due. Hence, it will be easier on them to both introduce Zotero and have students use it early in the semester, even in small ways.

✓ Technical difficulties: Adding more programs to your course that probably already uses several others only increases the probability for things to go wrong. Getting your whole class on board early in the semester before any big assignments are due can ensure technical problems are smoothed over before they become a problem.

✓ Students with Chromebooks: Zotero cannot be installed on a Chromebook – they will have to use the browser version of Zotero. These students will also not be able to use the Word Cite While You Write tools, but can only copy and paste Zotero citations into Google Docs.

✓ Citation Knowledge: Students may not be able to translate what Zotero fields are necessary to the citation. It is important when introducing the program, to integrate it into teaching citation style, making sure to point out the required fields/citation information that their item needs to make a full citation.

✓ Web-sources: (Newspapers, Blogs, YouTube Videos, Images, etc.) – Zotero doesn’t always gather all of the citation information for these sources. Make a point to tell your students that just because Zotero didn’t get the information, doesn’t mean they don’t need it.
  o Rule: Zotero is only as good as the information you give it.

✓ The Web-Page Problem: Students often can’t tell the difference between a web-page and an online journal, magazine article, blog, etc. Sometimes, neither can Zotero. Help your students
note the differences between sources, especially online sources so that they can correct when Zotero gets it wrong.

✓ **CRAP:** While Zotero can help students keep track of all of their sources and prevent plagiarism, it doesn’t eliminate their tendency to rely on low-quality sources. Emphasize to your students that Zotero is an organizational tool, not a C.R.A.P filter – they need to learn how to recognize the variations in source quality and authority themselves.

✓ **Deadlines:** Add the “Date Added” field to the main window in the library to see at a glance when a student added a source (Zotero tracks this automatically).

✓ **Demo Often:** Use Zotero when demonstrating other aspects of research/writing, for instance when discussing keywords or databases, or how to quote a text.

✓ **Freebies:** For assignments that have a set list of texts (for instance a primary text and a theoretical text), you can give students the full citation information in the Zotero library. i.e. if they use Zotero, they will get a correct citation or two free of work.

### Buy-in:

✓ Emphasize the transferability of a tool like Zotero. While students may never take another UWS or English course, Zotero can be used for all of their college courses and even beyond the university.

✓ Many Students already use online tools (guiltily) to help them write their citations. Encouraging the use of a relatively reliable tool can redirect their desire to cut corners in a productive way.

✓ Again, transferability. One of the reasons students grumble about citation style is that there are so many different styles for different disciplines, styles can change, and they may not be expecting to use academic citation in their careers. Zotero can take (some of) the “useless” memorization and busy-work out of their semester.

✓ Plagiarism haunts students. They know it is a problem. They know they can get in serious trouble for it. They know they have probably plagiarized accidentally in the past because they didn’t keep track of their sources or had to quickly find a source to meet a requirement. Zotero can be a bit of a security blanket for these nervous students.

✓ Research is in some ways more about organization than writing. Staying organized during the research process can make an impact on the quality of the writing and potentially result in a higher grade. Simply not making major citation errors can also protect a student’s grade.

✓ Using Zotero as a shared resource for a course also debunks the belief that research is a solitary and comprehensive endeavor. Sharing the research process using Zotero Groups encourages students to pool their existing research knowledge alongside the deeper knowledge of their instructor to both learn more skills while having a stronger basis for their individual work that semester.

✓ Zotero Groups do open up possible academic integrity issues (students can rely on the hard work of their peers instead of doing their own work). However, this is another opportunity for an open discussion about the responsibilities of the researcher to give credit where it is due. I find students are more open to a discussion about “academic integrity” when it is aimed at protecting their own work as well as their peers’ (as opposed to protecting someone they don’t know or see).