Nurse Author & Editor

Leslie H. Nicoll, PhD, MBA, RN, FAAN Editor-in-Chief

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Paperpile and Google Docs

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Peggy L. Chinn

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For many years now, I have urged students and colleagues, to immediately stop typing their citations and references, and get on board with any one of the reference management systems, also called "bibliography database managers," available. There is simply no reason to continually type the same information over and over, relying on your own typing accuracy, and remembering how to format your citations and references accurately—accomplishments that are way too time consuming and simply beyond human capability. But as convincing as this argument is, more often than not many who were subjected to my urging declined to make the commitment to

using a reference manager. Often people felt they did not have the time to invest in learning how to use the program and for many, learning such an application seemed like a huge technological hurdle they just could not face! I have to say I understood their reticence, having experienced the challenges of Endnote myself. But I also knew very well that making the investment of time, and learning at least the basics of a reference management system, would be well worth the effort.

But now there is Paperpile—the low-cost, intuitive, increasingly popular web-based reference management system which is making the the barriers of time and a steep learning curve vanish. Of course it does require some time, and a bit of learning, but Paperpile eases both of these barriers considerably, and there is terrific support if you do run into problems (see https://paperpile.com/help). Paperpile does require that you use the Chrome web browser, which is intuitively similar to any other modern web browser. It also requires that you have a Google account (which is free), and that you use Google Docs, which is a free web-based document processing application that is intuitive, relatively simple, and has many advantages over Word, especially if you are collaborating with other authors on a document. Paperpile has a free 30-day introduction, and thereafter costs only $2.99 a month, billed annually (see https://paperpile.com/pricing).

Paperpile is catching on in a big way. Ben Goldacre, a keynote speaker at the International Academy of Nursing Editors meeting in 2016 recently tweeted:

And in a press release from Paperpile, it was noted:

> *In a recent survey of Paperpile users, 84% fully replaced their old desktop software with it—71% previously used EndNote and/or Mendeley. They use Paperpile to write documents that are vital to their career, funding or degree: 55% to write articles for peer reviewed journals; 25% for grant applications; 21% for PhD or Master's theses and 12% for books or book chapters (Washietl, 2015).*

I first discovered Paperpile when Leslie Nicoll and I were writing our book *Writing in the Digital Age: Savvy Publishing for Healthcare Professionals* (Nicoll & Chinn, 2015). Our section on Reference Managers (Chapter 2) acknowledges Paperpile and indicates that we switched to Paperpile for our references, but the information there was prepared when we were first discovering Paperpile, and it is quite limited in describing the many advantages of using both Paperpile and Google Docs. I have now prepared two book revisions and a couple dozen articles and essays using Google Docs and Paperpile (including this piece!), most of which are co-authored manuscripts.

The exclusive compatibility of PaperPile with Chrome and Google Docs may annoy you, and this may change in the future. But do not let this be a barrier to giving it a try. The bottom line is that once you use these platforms, you are likely to discover so many advantages that you will only go back to your currently familiar platforms if they update their applications to match the ease of use that comes with the "Chrome + Google Docs + Paperpile" combo!

As documented in many reviews of the product, and my own experience, Paperpile has many advantages compared to the expensive legacy applications like Endnote, RefWorks, and so on (Hope, 2015; Lancet, 2014). It may be a bit daunting to learn for someone who has never used a reference management system, but it is much easier to learn and use than the legacy programs that require a download to your computer. Paperpile searches the web in seconds for

all of the citation information on your sources (including DOIs) and if a PDF of the article is available, it gives you access to download it and save to Paperpile. All of your citation information, and any attached PDF files, are stored securely on the Paperpile server, and all citation information is updated in seconds if there are any changes to the sources.

If you have a current reference library in another reference manager system, you can import that library into Paperpile in seconds. In addition to importing your references, Paperpile automatically updates and adds citation information you may not have included, such as DOIs and abstracts. If you discover a new source in the process of preparing your manuscript, and it is not already in your Paperpile library, all you need to do is ask Paperpile to find the source, select the database you want to draw from (e.g. PubMed, CrossRef, Google Scholar), and poof—the complete reference data is added to your library. You can edit any of the reference information, and add references manually to Paperpile if you have a reference from an unusual source. I have found that manual entry is especially useful when I want to use a web site as a source.

Once a reference is in your Paperpile library, adding the citation to a Google document and formatting it in any of over 8000 styles is easy and fast. Because you are logged into your Google account for both Paperpile and Google Docs, your new document will show "Paperpile" on the main menu, giving you instant access to your library. There is also a Paperpile add-on which keeps Paperpile visible and easily accessible. With your cursor in the correct location for the citation you want to add, find and select the source or sources you want to cite from the Paperpile menu, and it is automatically added as a citation in your manuscript and an entry in your reference list, with all information formatted in your preferred style. The link to your Paperpile source remains active so that you can easily return to Paperpile to make any edits to the reference as needed.

If you are working with a co-author, sharing your file is extremely important, and Google Drive has many advantages over other cloud sharing platforms. All documents that you create in Google Docs are stored on your Google Drive, with access to the files on your computer even if you are not connected to the internet. It is important to understand that files are shared through the web, not through a desktop application.1 This means that all changes made by anyone who has access to a file are saved in real time for all users. If all users are viewing the file while someone is making changes, everyone sees the actual typing! It also means that everyone has access to the Paperpile library that is being used for references and citations. Google Docs keeps a record of up to 100 revisions for 30 days including information as to who made the changes and when. This means that if you need to restore a previous version, it is readily available.

There is one caveat about the wonders of Paperpile—it does not recognize that an author who has published using several variations of their name is actually one person. After all, Paperpile, like any computer system, relies on utter consistency and accuracy of each and every keystroke. For example, my colleague Mickey Eliason has published over 100 notable articles on LGBTQ health. For some, her authorship is documented as Michelle Eliason or Michelle J. Eliason. For others, her name is Mickey Eliason or Mickey J. Eliason. Still others show her name as MJ Eliason. Since she uses all of these forms of her name in real life, she never attempted to have her name listed in a consistent form, not realizing that someday this would be important. When Paperpile prepares a reference list that includes several of her publications, each name is treated as a different person. In other words, the full reference contains her name in two different forms, but in creating the APA citation, her name translates to "Eliason, MJ" whether her name appears in the reference as "Mickey J" or Michelle J." This means that if I cite two of her articles published in the same year and her name is in two different forms, instead of being listed as "Eliason, M.J. (2014a)" followed by "Eliason, M.J. (2014b),"

Paperpile inserts two different entries in the reference list and readers cannot discern which of the articles cited for 2014 is the appropriate citation. The only way to remedy this problem and create a proper reference list is to manually edit Mickey's name to a consistent form in all of the references that appear in Paperpile. Fortunately, this is not a common problem, but it is one to be aware of.

There is also one caveat related to Google docs—it is not as feature-rich as Word. This is actually something that has drawn me to prefer Google Docs over Word—I like the clean, simple and uncluttered look and feel of Google Docs. And most of the many powerful features of Word are things that I never use; in fact I have not found any feature that I use regularly that is missing in Google Docs. However, if you are someone who uses and likes some of the many powerful features available in Word, you might miss having them in Google Docs.

I should note that my colleague Leslie Nicoll does have a workaround to use Paperpile with Word—she has not made the complete conversion to Google Docs (although I am working on her about that!). What she does is cite the reference in Paperpile, then copy to the clipboard, and paste into Word. This entails a few more clicks and is not as quick and easy as using Google Docs, but it still avoids retyping and styling reference citations by hand.

Since most of the world still requires Word documents (publishers like manuscripts in Word!), when your document is ready, you simply select the menu option to download your Google document as a Word, PDF, or any one of several other formats. The transfer to Word is, in my experience, perfect, even in documents that contain tables or figures. Once I have created the Word file I save it in the same Google Drive location as the Google Doc.

If you have a writing and manuscript preparation system that includes a legacy reference manager system that is working well, then keep doing what you are

doing. But, if you are open to considering a shift to Paperpile and Google Docs, I encourage you to do so! If you are not using a reference manager system yet, dive right into Paperpile! Take some time to explore the excellent overview of Paperpile and Google Docs integration features here (https://paperpile.com/features). If you are switching to Paperpile from another reference management system, get instructions on how to migrate your library here (https://paperpile.com/help#guide-migrate). Then start with the paper you need to write now, and start adding your citations. In no time at all, you will be on your way!

FOOTNOTE

1. *Dropbox, which is also a valuable cloud storage and document sharing application, shares files through the desktop application on your computer, which results in conflicted copies of shared files when any one person makes changes to a document at the same time.*

EDITOR'S NOTE

The articles in *Nurse Author & Editor* have been optimized to import correctly into Paperpile, including the PDF. All you need to do is click the Paperpile icon on your toolbar while viewing the article. Paperpile will search the page for the article metadata and automatically add it to your reference library. LHN

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peggy L. Chinn, PhD, RN, FAAN is the Editor-in-Chief of *Advances in Nursing Science,* author of a few books, and manager or co-manager of several wibsites/blogs, including INANE. She is an Author-in-Residence for *Nurse Author & Editor.*

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