



## CALA Occasional Paper Series

### **EndNote Blog: an Effective Alternative to Troubleshooting EndNote**

By

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## Abstract

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) University Libraries have provided support for many years to faculty, students and staff in the use of EndNote. Those interested may attend a librarian-led class or learn independently utilizing an online tutorial. Campus librarians are available to provide assistance on EndNote in person, by phone, or via email. However, these efforts did not seem to be sufficient to meet our users' needs. Some questions have been asked again and again and by many users. To provide an effective, convenient and readily available solution to users' problems, an EndNote users' group blog was created to address those frequently asked questions. The blog has been heavily used by library users as well as the general public since its creation. Comments received have been very impressive. The Blog proves an effective alternative to troubleshooting problems related to EndNote and it is now a main source of support for our EndNote users.

*Keywords:* EndNote, EndNote blog, reference management, citation management, reference management, reference tools, research tools, library instruction, troubleshooting, research services, research support, research assistance.

## Introduction

The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ) University Libraries have provided support for many years to faculty, students and staff in the use of EndNote. EndNote is a bibliographic management tool which allows users to manage their research by collecting, storing, and organizing references, images, and PDF files. Researchers can also use the tool to insert references into their manuscripts and to create subject bibliographies as well as reading lists. Librarians have played a very important role in helping our users with their research by using EndNote as their bibliographic management tool. We offer classes, provide trouble shooting, and answer all kinds of questions on the use of this tool (Zhang, 2012). Those users who are interested may attend a librarian-led class. Classes can be taught on one-to-one basis either at the user's site or in the library. Group classes are also conducted for interested departments arranged by secretaries or coordinators. Faculty members in the medical school, the School of

Public Health (SPH), the Graduate School of Biological Sciences (GSBS), University Behavioral Health Care (UBHC), and Physician Assistant (PA) Program have invited librarians to teach a session on how to use EndNote for their classes. Those sessions were all well received by the graduate students and proved very helpful in their research assignments.

Studies have shown that citation management software tutorials are very popular, particularly with EndNote being the most predominant topic (Anderson et al., 2008). Like 65% academic health sciences libraries in the United States that created their own tutorials (Anderson et al., 2008), we have also provided online tutorials posted in the library website. Those users who are not able to take a class can learn how to use EndNote independently by utilizing the tutorials provided on the website. Links were also provided to some third party tutorials such as those provided by Thomson Reuters and other university libraries.

In addition, campus librarians are available to offer assistance on EndNote in person, by phone, or via email. Sometimes a web conferencing tool is utilized to walk through the steps with the user remotely. One would think that all these different kinds of ways of learning EndNote should satisfy the users' needs. However, all these efforts did not seem to be sufficient to meet our users' needs. Some questions have been asked again and again and by many users. To provide an effective, convenient and readily available solution to users' problems, the author investigated various ways to tackle this issue. Eventually, an EndNote users' group blog was created to address those frequently asked questions.

### **Building an EndNote Blog**

As mentioned earlier, in order to find an effective way to provide solutions to users' frequently asked questions, the author investigated various ways including performing literature searches and exploring what practices other health sciences libraries were using. According to the same study cited above, a variety of software was used to create tutorials and guides. It includes screen recording software, multimedia programs, word processing programs, and presentation programs. HTML editors were the most commonly utilized software to design tutorials (Anderson et al., 2008). Since the majority of the software mentioned above had already been used or tried, the author was more interested to find a unique tool like a social media tool that would allow a user to find an answer quickly to his or her specific questions.

After experimenting with several tools such as a wiki, a blogspot blog, the author eventually created the EndNote Users' Group Blog at <http://umdendnote.wordpress.com> (Zhang, 2008), now known as the EndNote Blog, in June 2008, based on the free version of the Wordpress platform, which "has emerged as a uniquely flexible content-management system (CMS) with many library-related applications" (ALA, 2012). The author chose this platform

because of its intuitive interface, easiness to use, flexibility for administering, and the fact that it is freely available to the public. The blog displays various categories representing issues that are often encountered by our users, archives of past postings, a customized QR code of the blog, a calendar, and some useful links. It also embeds the schedules of EndNote workshops offered by the company support staff. Having specific categories makes it much easier for users to navigate or to go directly into a section of their interest, instead of having to go through the entire blog for the desired information. New postings are added each month, some of which are updates on old issues while others address new ones.

All the questions posted in the blog are real questions that the users have asked the librarians. The users' names are removed to ensure confidentiality. In the past, the author would answer the user directly their question. Now that the blog is in place, in addition to answering the questions directly to the user, the author also posted the question and answer in a Q&A format in the blog in the hope that other users will find the answers by themselves in case they have the same question. The author also encouraged other librarians and colleagues to post in the blog by adding their usernames as administrators. Unfortunately, not many of them have a Wordpress account. Even though it is free to register for an account, they do not seem to be interested to do so. Only two other librarians participated and posted occasionally in the blog.

The blog has been heavily used by both UMDNJ users and general public since its launching in June 2008. As of the time of writing, the blog has been visited 275,756 times in total as shown in Figure 1:

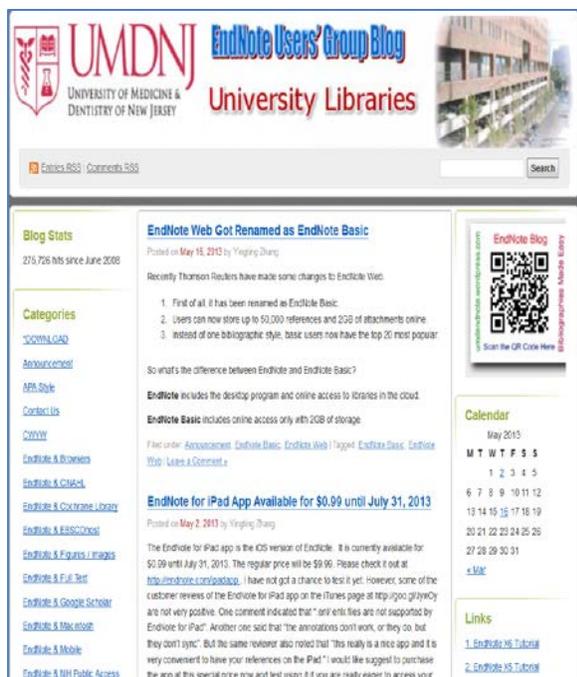


Figure 1: EndNote Blog (http://umdendnote.wordpress.com)

As the blog was visited more and more often, it became so popular that it was even positively mentioned in one of the presentations at an annual meeting of the Virtual Academic Library Environment of New Jersey (VALE). The popularity triggered the author to start to keep track of the usage statistics of the blog. From the statistical analysis of the blog usage conducted by the author at the beginning of the year, it was found that the usage of the blog has steadily increased in the past four and half years. It is worth mentioning that in 2009 there was a big increase in the usage compared to the previous year. That was because there were only seven months in 2008 as the blog was created in June. Another factor for the difference might be that initially not many people were aware of the existence of the blog. Since then each year the number of visits has been increasing by more or less 20,000 visits over the previous year. This growth is significant considering the fact that there has been very little publicity or promotion devoted to the blog other than placing a link to the blog in the library website and word of mouth by the students. The steady increase can be better viewed via a bar graph (see Figure 2):

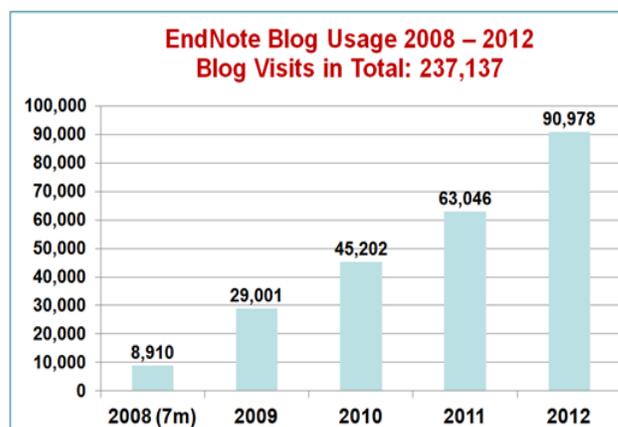


Figure 2: EndNote Blog Usage Statistics, June 2008 – Dec 2012

While analyzing the statistical data, the author was expecting to find that many referrals to the blog would initiate from the library website where a link to the blog is available. Surprisingly, almost all of the users including UMDNJ faculty, staff and students, approached the blog by searching for the desired information in the Internet. Only a small number of people (1%) were actually referred to the blog from the library website, as shown in Figure 3.

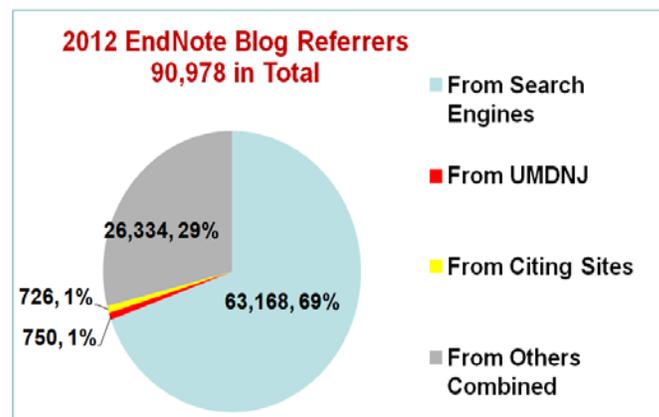


Figure 3: EndNote Blog Referrers

The findings make one wonder how many users are actually utilizing the tools such as library guides and tutorials that librarians have created via the library website. It seems that users prefer searching to navigating or

browsing when they are looking for quick helpful tips. Therefore, it is not surprising that the CMS-based EndNote blog, with its strong searching capabilities for easy and quick retrieval, has been used more and more frequently by users. Being aware of the users' preference, librarians need to think out of the box in providing helpful tips and library subject guides to their users. It is equally important to supply those tags or keywords that are familiar to those used by the users, rather than terminologies preferred by librarians. Search terms entered to look for EndNote related information were captured in the blog statistics. Figure 4 below shows the top 25 search terms in the past four and half years.

Search Terms for all days ending 2010-05-30 (Summarized)	
Search	Views
endnote word 2007	1,428
endnote x5 download	1,054
ama style endnote	903
endnote x2 word 2007	729
endnote word	719
endnote ama style	674
endnote x5	648
endnote x1 word 2007	624
endnote x3 word 2007	608
endnote x2	599
endnote x3 product key	549
endnote x word 2007	528
endnote word 2007 add in	409
endnote x2 product key	471
endnote smart group	410
how to add endnote to word	363
add endnote to word	345
cite while you write	335
how to add endnote to word 2007	333
download endnote x5	316
ama endnote	313
endnote x5 free download	311
endnote product key	307
recover endnote library	307
ote while you write word 2010	300

Figure 4: Top 25 Search Terms

### Benefits

The blog is now a main source of support for our EndNote users. A gradual decrease in class registrations coupled with an increase in EndNote blog statistics suggests that users are finding the desired information on the blog. They can find solutions to their problems even when the library is closed and their librarians are not available to assist them. The

blog has been heavily used and well received not only by our library users but also by the global research community, as proven in the many positive comments received. Figure 5 displays only a small number of comments as an example. The impact of the blog on the research community is significant. Being publicly available to the information community, the blog promotes information sharing and collaboration among researchers in the world.



Figure 5: Selected Comments Received on the EndNote Blog

### Conclusion

The EndNote Blog has been an effective alternative to traditional ways of troubleshooting issues related to the use of EndNote. The Blog has resolved many common issues related to EndNote that are frequently encountered by many of our users. Better yet, we did not use any library fund, as the Blog was built on a free open source content management system. This is particularly important in the current economic situation where library budget cuts are common and resources are limited. This project, through innovative use of open source blog software, has provided yet another example of librarians not only possessing the knowledge

of emerging technologies, but also being able to utilize them creatively. By providing effective support on EndNote 24/7 to the researchers, this project illustrates the important role that librarians can play in the academic research community and the positive impact that they can make as a result of their willingness to go above and beyond to serve their users.

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