

What are the ways to strengthen PLN (Professional Learning Network) and enhance collaboration with colleagues?

## Description



What are the ways to strengthen PLN (Professional Learning Network) and enhance collaboration with colleagues? Professional learning networks (PLNs) are educators who collaborate, communicate, and learn from each other to improve their teaching and learning practices. PLNs can take many forms, including online communities, social media groups, and person-to-person meetings. The benefits of

professional learning networks (PLNs) are that educators move beyond silos and foster collaboration, innovation, and professional growth even when dealing with a lack of institutional support and challenges of technological difficulties. (Trust, Carpenter, and Krutka, 2017). Regardless of where you are or what kind of background you may have, PLNs can expose you to new ideas, perspectives, and practices, promoting continuous learning and development. PLNs can also support educators's™ professional growth through feedback and reflection and help teachers to stay up-to-date with the latest technologies.

I want to introduce a digital tool, Zotero, which can strengthen PLN by enhancing collaboration with colleagues. Zotero is a free and open-source reference management software that allows users to collect, organize, cite, and share research sources. "Zotero is a project of the Corporation for Digital Scholarship, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the development of software and services for researchers and cultural heritage institutions, and is developed by a global community (Zotero.org, 2006)". One of the key features of Zotero is its ability to allow users to collaborate on projects. The following are collaboration features described on their website, Zotero.org:

**Syncing:** Use Zotero on multiple computers with Zotero syncing. Library items and notes are synced through the Zotero servers (unlimited storage), while attachment syncing can use the Zotero servers or your own WebDAV service to sync files such as PDFs, images, or audio/video.

**Zotero Servers:** Items synced to the Zotero servers can be accessed online through your zotero.org account. Share your library with others or create a custom C.V. from selected items. Make copies of your research readily available on zotero.org for readers, the public, and other researchers using My Publications.

**Groups:** Zotero users can create collaborative or interest groups. Shared group libraries make it possible to collaboratively manage research sources and materials, both online and through the Zotero client. Zotero.org can be the hub of all your project group's™ research, communication and organization.

Collaboration in Zotero is facilitated through groups, which users can create and be public or private. It allows multiple users to work on a project simultaneously and easily share resources to collaborate on research. It is built for real-time collaboration, making discussing research findings and ideas easier. Users can add sources to a group library; all group members can access those sources. It is much easier to collaborate on research projects, mainly when working remotely or with colleagues in different locations. Zotero is known for its ability to save references from library catalogs, research databases, and the web, and it automatically fills in bibliographic references and citations. The auto-filling of the abstract is also helpful for going back and finding the study. Zotero allows for easy annotation and tagging of sources, making organizing and categorizing research materials easier (Strothmann, 2018).

However, there are some drawbacks to using Zotero for collaboration. One disadvantage is that tracking who has made changes to a project can be challenging, especially if multiple users are working on it simultaneously. Also, some may require some time to become familiar with the software. Despite these drawbacks, Zotero remains an excellent tool for collaboration. Its features to share resources, work in real-time, and organize research materials makes it a helpful resource for researchers and educators.

Many findings also suggest that Zotero is an effective tool for collaboration in research and academic settings (Strothmann, 2018). Because it facilitates communication between members and efficiently

organizes and lets the user share research materials, it enhances collaboration and further strengthens PLN. I recommend that researchers, educators, and higher education students use it. The software itself was created through the collaboration of researchers to improve resource management, and it continues to evolve through global forums and feedback to make it better for users.

As stated in ISTE Standards of Coaches: 4.3. Collaborator, *Coaches establish productive relationships with educators in order to improve instructional practice and learning outcomes. Coaches: 4.3.a. Establish trusting and respectful coaching relationships that encourage educators to explore new instructional strategies. 4.3.b. Partner with educators to identify digital learning content that is culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate and aligned to content standards. 4.3.c. Partner with educators to evaluate the efficacy of digital learning content and tools to inform procurement decisions and adoption. 4.3.d. Personalize support for educators by planning and modeling the effective use of technology to improve student learning.* PLN is strengthened through collaboration. A tool like Zotero can enhance PLN collaboration. PLN can also encourage and support educators to explore new ways, helping those who may be accustomed to the old ways. Educators have a common goal of improving student learning. By exchanging ideas through communication and collaboration with having mutual respectful coaching relationships, PLN is strengthened, and each member benefits from it.

## References

Strothmann, M. (2018, Spring). Zotero: A Guide for Librarians, Researchers and Educators, 2nd ed. Reference & User Services Quarterly, 57(3), 222.

Trust, T., Carpenter, J. P., & Krutka, D. G. (2017). Moving beyond silos: Professional learning networks in higher education. The Internet and Higher Education, 35, 1-11. doi:10.1016/j.iheduc.2017.06.001

Zotero.org (2006)



## Category

1. Blog

## Date Created

April 17, 2023

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