

Browser Extensions For The Stretched Health Librarian

Rob Penfold

Librarian | Peninsula Health Library

Robpenfold@phcn.vic.gov.au | <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5879-7388>

Introduction	28
Installing Chrome Extensions	28
Setting up keyboard shortcuts to extensions	28
Training	29
Collection access	29
Monitoring	30
Reference Managers	30
Search	31
Odds & Ends	32
Managing Extensions	33

Introduction

Browser extensions – also known as plug-ins and add-ons – increase the capabilities of a web browser, and as such can be very useful. In this article, I will focus mainly on the most popular browser (Google Chrome, approx. 65% market share) but the same principles apply to all browsers. Additionally, a number of browsers (Microsoft Edge, Opera, Brave, Vivaldi) can use extensions from the Chrome Web Store as all are based on the same underlying Chromium engine.

Given the multitudes of extensions available, health librarians in Australia, the US, the UK and Europe were asked what extensions they found useful in a work context. From those responses, as well as personal experience using particular extensions, a set of extensions are briefly described below. Focus was given on extensions that are free and potentially useful in a health librarian work setting.

Installing Chrome Extensions

The most direct way is to bookmark the Chrome Web Store <https://chrome.google.com/webstore/category/extensions>, and then search for extensions. Once found, click on Add to Chrome. After installation, it will be hidden in the icon that looks like a jigsaw piece in the top right – to make it visible click on that icon and then click on the extension pin icon. With Microsoft Edge, you can use the Chrome Web Store and click on Add to Chrome when prompted.

Setting up keyboard shortcuts to extensions

Type `chrome://extensions/shortcuts` into the omnibar / search bar, and bookmark it for future easy access. Not every extension offers keyboard shortcuts but if the

extension in question does, click on the pencil icon to edit, then type a keyboard shortcut that can be remembered. For example, if you use LastPass then you might use Alt L. Choose a keyboard shortcut that is not going to clash with other system or browser keyboard shortcuts.

Training

A number of extensions have appeared recently that make creating training materials easier. Examples include Scribe, Tango and Guidde. Scribe and Tango have been compared and contrasted in a recent JoHILA article ([Tech Showdown – Tango vs Scribe](#)). Guidde is broadly similar to Tango and Scribe. A new feature in Tango that has appeared since that article was published is that it now allows the instructions to be shown side by side with the live website, so clients can work their way through the process on the actual site. In this way it mimics [Guide on the Side](#) and Springshare's LibWizard.

One disadvantage with all three extensions is that, with the free version at least, capture seems to be limited to the browser screen itself such that you cannot easily capture actions involving the search bar, browser settings and the like. Additionally capturing pop ups (like the "Cite As" pop up in PubMed) is not generally supported; although Guidde allows you to do this via a screenshot option. An alternative (not an extension) which allows you to use screenshots to capture anything on your screen is [Pitch](#). For training videos, a number of health librarians suggested [Loom](#) which allows for 25 videos up to 5 min in length for free.

Collection access

These extensions, once installed, aim to remove the need for clients to visit the library to access subscribed content. The most well-known ones in this space are [LibKey Nomad](#) and [Lean Library](#) but as this article is focussing on free content, they won't be discussed further.

[Endnote Click](#). This can be linked to a library's subscribed content. According to the vendor, it will work on 20,000 platforms to indicate access (either subscribed or open access, with subscribed content given preference). On a PubMed results page, for instance, a purple box will indicate immediate access to full text (sometimes the access works better via going to the individual record page). A grey button will allow the user to connect to the library subscriptions and will either provide full text or allow it to be requested. On a journal article page, after signing in, the Endnote Click icon takes a significant amount of time to appear in the lower left corner of the screen. If clients have a similar experience, many might miss the option.

[EBSCOhost Passport](#). This was released during the course of writing, so hasn't been fully tested. It appears to function a bit similarly to LibKey Nomad and Endnote Click, in facilitating access to subscribed content when clients are roaming wild (ie not on

the library home page). However, the access to subscribed content only works for libraries using EBSCO's Holdings Management tool. For such libraries, no steps are required to enable such access.

Both of the above extensions don't seem as seamless to use as LibKey Nomad. However, for libraries with limited budgets they may provide useful options in this area, particularly if supported with good training material.

Monitoring

Sometimes it is useful to be able to monitor a website for a new report or similar.

[Distill Web Monitor](#). The free version allows monitoring of 25 sites. The advantage of it is that you can select a specific section of the page to monitor. Some other similar extensions monitor the whole page so get frequently triggered by ads, Twitter feed updates and the like.

[PageProbe](#). This allows unlimited monitoring of specific parts of a web page but is a little less intuitive than Distill Web Monitor. Select a section of interest on a page, right click and click on Track Content. On the resulting pop up, select time interval and with the "Add Action" button choose Show Notification. Add another Action and choose Save Previous Value for Comparison as this will show you what has actually changed.

[RSS Reader Extension \(by Inoreader\)](#). An easy to use RSS reader with the free version allowing 150 sites to be followed. Click on the extension (or use a keyboard shortcut) to activate the extension on the site of interest, to see if it offers a feed which is checked via a blue square containing a plus. Useful for keeping up with sites of interest and reducing the number of email newsletters.

Reference Managers

Citation managers have a lot of functionality which is beyond the scope of this article. All of the below are web based (or in the case of Zotero, provide a Web Library option) which can be useful in organisations where software installation is constrained. All provide an option to collect citations from Google Scholar (in the case of Paperpile via a floating button next to every record. This button changes colour when a citation has already been added which is quite useful when looking at lots of GS results). All support extension keyboard shortcuts for rapid capture of citations (in the case of Sciwheel you can save a citation at this point to a specific library), which is much quicker and easier than the export/import process required by some citation managers.

[Zotero Connector](#).

[Sciwheel](#).

[Paperpile](#). Not free but a 30-day trial is available, and then \$36/pa. Has an easy option to share results (including PDFs) with clients, e.g. see [here](#).

Search

[TrufflePiggy Quick Search](#)

Why useful?

Make frequently searched sites (e.g. Google Scholar, PubMed etc) easily accessible, either via your right click mouse menu or the pink pig icon that appears next to selected text. Groups of sites can also be added which allows searching of multiple sites at once after selecting the relevant text. I use this extension multiple times each day and find it saves a lot of time once you get used to using it.

Steps:

1. Install extension and create account (can use Google etc). Select some random website text and a pink snout will appear. Click on this and then on Edit Searches.
2. Default searches are on the left, a bank of searches in the middle, and groups of searches on the right.
3. Delete non-useful default searches and drag across useful searches from the middle bank.
4. PubMed is already available in the search bank but perhaps you would prefer your own Otool version. Use the "Create new search item" button and follow the instructions (basically search the site of interest for trufflepiggy and add the resulting URL). Note that it needs to be a site that shows the search term in the URL. See also this [video](#)
5. Search groups can be created using the "Create new group" button by dragging items from the search bank. Once created, drag it to the left hand My Searches column. This can be useful, for example, for searching for an item across several eBook vendors. Note that password protected sites can be searched. Either ensure you are logged in beforehand or login when prompted after the search.
6. Additional tips. What if you need to search something that is not easily accessible as website text to select? Just activate the extension by clicking on it, or better still, via a keyboard shortcut (as above). Enter the search text and either click on the search or press tab and then the letter or number next to the search to do the search. (Note – if you have accessed this search dialog via selected text then the shortcut letters or numbers can be used immediately without having to tab).

The search box that appears via the activated extension supports multiline searching. So if you have several DOI's to search, for example, just enter or paste them on separate lines.

Odds & Ends

A smattering of extensions that may be useful in certain contexts.

[Copy as plain text](#). Adds a mouse right click option to do what it says on the jar.

[Wayback machine](#). If you arrive on a dead link, find a cached version of the live page. This also can be used to add specific pages to the repository which could be useful if there is a suspicion that the site in question may disappear over time.

[Bitwarden](#). Password manager – only need to remember one password.

[Cookie Remover](#). Not a diet aid. Again, what it says on the (cookie) jar – i.e. removes cookies for the current page.

[OCR Image Reader](#). Copy and paste text from images, videos, PDFs, PowerPoints, and those odd web pages that have disabled copying text. ([Video](#))

[Start.me](#). Collect and organise bookmarks to a web page that is accessible from any browser or device. Useful when juggling different browsers, working at work and home, accessing via your phone and so on.

[Save to Social](#). Easily share web pages to various sites including email. If you set a keyboard shortcut (e.g. Alt S) then can press this, then tab to select platform, and then tab again to share.

[Axiom Browser Automation](#). Useful if you have any repetitive browser tasks. Useful to watch this [video](#) first.

[Text Blaze](#). Easy to use text expansion tool. For example, you can make it so that /pen automatically expands to <https://peninsulahealth.ovidds.com/> and so on. Also supports multiline text blocks with links.

[Clipboard History Pro](#) Windows already allows access to previously copied items (use Win V to see; if this doesn't work, enable it in clipboard settings). However, this doesn't carry over between Windows sessions. If you want ongoing access to copied content, then this extension provides it. You can favourite content for frequently pasted text.

[Print Friendly & PDF](#). Another self-explanatory extension

Managing Extensions

Extensions add functionality but if you are not careful, you can end up with too many which can impact browser performance and sometimes pose security risks.

Two approaches are presented to manage proliferating extensions:

Use Chrome Profiles. Click on the circular account icon at the top right of Chrome and, under Other Profiles, click Add, then Continue without an account (unfortunately neither Chrome nor Edge allow you to use the same email account for different profiles). Give it a name (e.g. Cataloguing) and then add whatever bookmarks and extensions you would like associated with that profile. You can easily switch between profiles by clicking on the account icon or using the keyboard shortcut Ctrl Shift M. Edge also offers profiles.

[One Click Extensions Manager](#). Set up a keyboard shortcut for it as before and then you can quickly disable or enable extensions via using the keyboard shortcut and then search. Use the up and down arrow keys to quickly navigate between extensions and the search box.

If anyone has any questions or suggestions, I'm happy to be contacted at robpenfold@phcn.vic.gov.au