Mendeley Customer Spotlight: Stanford University

How Mendeley supports research and information management at Stanford University

Stanford University — dedicated to research

Stanford University is one of the world’s most renowned research and teaching universities. Founded in 1891, Stanford is known for its entrepreneurial character, as it has always been dedicated to finding solutions to big challenges. This dedication to research excellence is reflected in the people: 22 of the faculty members are Nobel Prize laureates; faculty members and alumni are founding members of companies such as Google, Yahoo, Hewlett Packard, Nike and Sun Microsystems; and graduate researchers make up 56% of the student body.

With this focus on research, information is a resource in considerable demand, so it is only natural that the Stanford University Libraries are so important to this great institution. The librarians are the ones who have to understand the needs of the researchers and support them as best they can. Helen Josephine, Head of the Terman Engineering Library at Stanford University, gave Elsevier a clear picture of how she and her colleagues identified an issue that graduate students were facing and how they found a solution.

Dealing with a wealth of information

"If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants." - Sir Isaac Newton

Searching, reviewing, and citing past research work is a core part of a researcher’s life. Being able to effectively and efficiently store, organize, and find the right pieces of reference improves both productivity and research results. That’s a truth that every graduate student discovers quickly as the number of references on their hard drive piles up and valuable notes get misplaced or forgotten. Having a reference management tool to help them manage their citations, track their thoughts, and share their ideas is essential. If the reference management tool can also help them collaborate with their fellow researchers, that’s even better.

The Stanford University librarians recognized the importance of supporting their graduate students and faculty researchers in order to continue to ensure the university’s research excellence. The Stanford University libraries already provided many different reference management tools, but Helen felt that Mendeley had something more to offer. She knew that students and researchers

Helen Josephine has been Head of the Terman Engineering Library at Stanford University since 2007. She is the subject liaison to the faculty and students in the School of Engineering departments of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Electrical Engineering, and Management Science and Engineering. She also offers workshops and consultation to all students and faculty on campus on citation management tools and research databases. She is the Stanford University Library “champion” for the campus-wide adoption of Mendeley Institutional Edition (MIE). Helen is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) from the Project Management Institute and received her Master in Library Science from the University of California, Berkeley.
would need a tool like Mendeley — easy to use, secure, and accessible anywhere. She saw that the extra benefits such as the team collaboration features and access to one of the world’s largest academic social networks had considerable value. After familiarizing herself with the product, she started recommending it to the faculty and students as an excellent way of downloading, managing and sharing information.

What makes Mendeley right for researchers and graduate students

Helen says that Mendeley has three main qualities that make it right for graduate students and faculty members.

- Mendeley gives you access to your references wherever you are
- Mendeley allows annotation and sharing of notes and articles across group
- Mendeley enables you to promote your resumé on-line

The importance of scalability

When you have a small collection of articles, you can organize them in folders and subfolders on your desktop. As you get deeper into research — for example, when you go from being an undergraduate to doing your graduate work — the volume of articles increases dramatically. That means it’s difficult to find the article you need for your lab work or paper — and even harder to find the paragraph you need within that article.

Mendeley at Stanford

Use of Mendeley at Stanford has grown steadily since Helen introduced it to the university in the fall of 2010. There are almost 3500 users, about 1250 of whom have their accounts linked to the university to have premium Mendeley Institutional Edition access. The MIE access allows them to create many private groups that are suitable for different project purposes — and there are now 570 such groups. Being in a private group lets researchers read and jointly annotate shared articles, facilitating collaboration.

Helen introduces students and faculty members to the capabilities of Mendeley as part of new graduate students’ orientations and workshops. She also regularly presents Mendeley updates for other librarians across campus and speaks at department meetings to make the faculty aware of any updates. She finds that Mendeley seems to be the most popular with students and faculty of the biological sciences, engineering and computer science, but says that researchers from all disciplines use it.

Jessica Piper, a PhD candidate in Professor Shanhui Fan’s group, is working on the theory and simulation of light interacting with tiny structures. She’s a self-proclaimed big reader with a huge collection of scientific articles. It was very frustrating to deal with all those articles when they were in folders and subfolders on her hard drive. She also found it frustrating to deal with reference lists when she was writing her own papers. Now that she uses Mendeley, she’s much happier and her work is much more accurate. Her collection is organized and she can access it wherever she is.
Helen finds Mendeley excellent for dealing with any size of article collection. Tagging and organizing articles is straightforward and fully scalable, so as the collection grows, it remains manageable. What’s more, adding highlights and notes to articles helps you find the exact information you need much more quickly.

**Global access to references and information**

Mendeley gives you the possibility to access your articles wherever you are, and that is an obvious benefit in modern research, where travel to conferences and visits to other labs can keep you away from your desk.

**The link to research collaboration**

Sharing information enables researchers to collaborate. Whether you need to bring a new research group member up to speed on a project or you want to see who else at your institution (or anywhere around the world) is working in a particular area, Mendeley’s private groups and public profiles are highly beneficial. The rapid growth of private groups at Stanford University shows that this collaboration capability is a major driving factor in the rapid user adoption of Mendeley at the university.

Being able to see other researchers’ profiles and showcase your own is an additional level of the collaborative process. Helen says that knowing what other researchers are working on helps create community and can spark new projects. She recalls how an engineering student with an interest in energy research policy was quickly and easily able to connect with a professor of law and a student of economics on Mendeley to work on a paper together.

When Gennifer Smith joined Professor Audrey Ellerbee’s group as a PhD student in Electrical Engineering, part of her checklist was to download Mendeley and learn how to use it. Professor Ellerbee uses Mendeley to organize key references and bring new researchers up to speed in the lab. Every project in the research lab is collaborative. Gennifer is a member of four different private groups in Mendeley. She uses Mendeley to write papers, integrate new people into her working groups, and conduct their weekly updates for each project. She’s looking forward to broader collaboration in the future and thinks that her Mendeley profile will be a benefit when she’s attending conferences and meeting people from other institutions.

**Efficient research starts with efficient organization**

Helen has been very pleased to see how well Mendeley has been adopted by Stanford researchers. The librarians, faculty members and students who have used Mendeley at Stanford University praise it as an efficient and easy way to keep their literature collections organized. They also enjoy the benefit of Mendeley as an excellent collaborative tool that puts them in touch with over 3 million other Mendeley users.

Mendeley facilitates today’s research and sparks tomorrow’s new ideas.

Discover how Mendeley can facilitate your research at [elsevier.com/Mendeley](http://elsevier.com/Mendeley)

To learn more about how Mendeley facilitates Stanford researchers please watch this webinar replay: [https://www.brighttalk.com/webcast/11355/113435](https://www.brighttalk.com/webcast/11355/113435)