

Automatically update the entries of a bibtex file

**usage:** `bibupdate [-h] [-H] [-a] [-c] [-k] [-l LOG] [-o] [-p FIELDS] [-r FIELDS] [-q] [-w LEN] [-u {all,arxiv,mrlookup,mref,mathscinet}] bibtexfile [outputfile]`

This is a command line tool for updating the entries in a [BibTeX](#) file using [mrlookup](#). By default `bibupdate` tries to update the entry for each paper in the [BibTeX](#) file unless the entry already has an `mrnumber` field (you can disable future checking of an entry by giving it an empty `mrnumber` field).

### Options:

`bibtexfile` bibtex file to update (required)

`outputfile` output file (optional)

optional arguments:

```
-u --update {all,arxiv,mrlookup,mref,mathscinet} update mechanism (default: all)
-a, --all                update or validate ALL BibTeX entries
-c, --check              check, but do not update, bibtex entries against databases
-k, --keep_fonts         do NOT replace fonts \Bbb, \germ and \scr in titles
-l LOG, --log LOG        log messages to specified file (defaults to stdout)
-o, --overwrite          overwrite existing bibtex file (use carefully!)
-p FIELDS, --preserve-fields FIELDS
                        do not change the values of these bibtex fields
-r FIELDS, --remove-fields FIELDS
                        delete these bibtex fields
-q, --quieter            printer fewer messages
-w LEN, --wrap LEN       wrap bibtex fields to specified width

-h, --help              show this help message and exit
-H, --Help              print full program description
```

**Note:** As described below, you should check the new file for errors before deleting the original version of your [BibTeX](#) file.

By default, `bibupdate` does not change your original bibtex file. Instead, it creates a new file with the name *updated\_file.bib*, if your original file was *file.bib*. It is also possible to have it overwrite your current file (use carefully!), or to specify an output filename.

[BibTeX](#) is widely used by the [LaTeX](#) community to maintain publication databases. This script attempts to add missing fields to the papers in a [BibTeX](#) database file by querying [mrlookup](#) and getting the missing information from there. This is not completely routine because to search on [mrlookup](#) you need either the authors or the title of the article and both of these can have non-standard representations. If the article is already published then it is also possible to use the publication year and its page numbers. To search on [mrlookup](#) we:

- use the authors (can be problematic because of accents and names with von etc)
- use the page numbers, if they exist
- use the year only if there are no page numbers and this is NOT a preprint
- use the title if there are no page numbers (or this is a book)

If there is a unique (good, non-fuzzy) match from [mrlookup](#) then [bibupdate](#) replaces all of the current fields with those from [mrlookup](#), except for the citation key. The values of any fields that are not specified by [mrlookup](#), such as `eprint` fields, are retained. By default, a message is printed whenever existing fields in the database are changed. If the title of the retrieved paper does not (fuzzily) match that of the original article then the entry is NOT updated and a warning message is printed.

Although some care is taken to make sure that the new [BibTeX](#) entries correspond to the same paper that the original entry referred to there is always a (small?) chance the new entry corresponds to an entirely different paper. In my experience this happens rarely, and mostly with unpublished manuscripts. In any case, before you delete your original [BibTeX](#) file *you are strongly advised to check the updated file BibTeX file carefully for errors!*

To help the user to compare the updated fields for each entry in the [BibTeX](#) file the program prints a detailed list of all changes that are made to existing [BibTeX](#) fields (any new fields that are added are not printed). Once [bibupdate](#) has finished running it is recommended that you compare the old and new versions of your database using programs like *diff* and *tkdiff*.

As [bibupdate](#) calls [mrlookup](#) this program will only be useful if you have papers in your database that are listed in [MathSciNet](#). As described below it is also possible to call [MathSciNet](#) directly, however, this is less flexible because the `mrnumber` field for each paper is required.

I wrote this script because I wanted to automatically add links to journals, the [arXiv](#) and DOIs to the bibliographies of my papers using [hyperref](#). This script allowed me to add the missing urls and DOI fields to my [BibTeX](#) database. As a bonus the script helped me to correct many minor errors that had crept into my [BibTeX](#) file over the years (for example, incorrect page numbers and publication years). Now I use the program to automatically update the preprint entries in my database when the papers appear in [MathSciNet](#) after they are published.

Options and defaults:

```
-u --update {all,arxiv,mrlookup,mref,mathscinet} update mechanism (default: all)
```

By default `bibupdate_` will attempt to update the entries in the supplied `BibTeX_` file using the `arXiv_` and then cycling through the `AMS_` databases `mrlookup_`, `mref_` and `MathSciNet_`, in this order until it finds a match. The `arXiv_` is only searched if the `bibtex` entry does not have an `'eprint'` field and the `AMS_` databases are only searched if there is no `'mrnumber'` field. To change the default behaviour and search only one data

```
-a, --all Update or validate ALL BibTeX entries
```

By default `bibupdate_` only checks each `BibTeX_` entry with the `mrlookup` database if the entry does *not* have an `'mrnumber'` field. With this switch all entries are checked and updated.

```
-c --check Check/validate all bibtex entries against a database
```

Prints a list of entries in the `BibTeX_` file that have fields different from those given by the corresponding database. The original `BibTeX` file is not changed.

```
-k, --keep_fonts do NOT replace fonts \Bbb, \germ and \scr in titles
```

The `BibTeX_` entries generated by `mrlookup_` use `\Bbb`, `\germ` and `\scr` for the `\mathbb`, `\mathfrak` and `\mathscr` fonts. By default, in the `*title*` fields, these fonts specifications are automatically changed to the following more LaTeX friendly fonts:

```
- \Bbb X --> \mathbb{X}
- \scr X --> \mathcal{X}
- \germ X --> \mathfrak{X}
```

By using the `-k` option the fonts specification used by MathSciNet are used.

`-r FIELDS, --remove-fields=FIELDS` BibTeX\_ fields to remove when updating file

By default `bibupdate_` removes the following fields from each BibTeX\_ entry:

- coden
- mrreviewer
- fjjournal
- issn

This list can be changed using the `-r` command line option::

```
bibupdate -r "coden fjjournal" file.bib # ignore coden and fjjournal
bibupdate -r coden -r fjjournal file.bib # ignore coden and fjjournal
bibupdate -r "" file.bib                # do not ignore any fields
```

`-l LOG, --log LOG` Log output to file (defaults to stdout)

Specify a log filename to use for the `bibupdate_` messages.

`-m --mrlookup` Use `mrlookup` to update bibtex entries (default)

`-M --mathscinet` Use `mathscinet` to update bibtex entries

By default `mrlookup_` is used to update the BibTeX\_ entries in the database. This has the advantage of being a free service provided by the American Mathematical Society. A second advantage is the more flexible searching is possible when `mrlookup_` is used. It is also possible to update BibTeX\_ entries using `MathSciNet_`, however, these searches are currently only possible using the `'mrnumber'` field (so this option only does something if combined with the `--all` option or the `-check` option).

`-o --overwrite` Overwrite the existing bibtex file with the updated version

Replace the existing BibTeX\_ file with the updated file. A backup version of the original BibTeX\_ is made with a `.bak` extension. it is also possible to specify the output filename as the last argument to `bibupdate`.

`-q, --quieter` Print fewer messages

There are three levels of verbosity in how `bibupdate_` describes the changes that it is making. These are determined by the `q`-option as follows::

```
bibupdate    bibfile.bib    (Default) Report all changes
bibupdate -q bibfile.bib    (Warning mode) Only print entries that are changed
bibupdate -qq bibfile.bib   (Quiet mode) Only print error messages
```

By default all changes are printed (to stdout, although a log file can be specified by the `-l` option). In the default mode `bibupdate_` will tell you what entries it changes and when it *is not* able to find the paper on the database (either because there are no matches or because there are too many). If it is not able to find the paper and `bibupdate_` thinks that the paper is not a preprint then it will mark the missing entry with an exclamation mark, to highlight that it thinks that it should have found the entry in `mrlookup_` but failed. Here is some sample output::

```
-----
? did not find Webster:CanonicalBasesHigherRep=Canonical bases and higher representatio
+++++
+ updating Weyl=
```

```

+ publisher: Princeton University Press
+         -> Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ
-----
? did not find Williamson:JamesLusztig=Schubert calculus and torsion
-----
! did not find QSAIL=On Quantitative Substitutional Analysis

```

Each `bibtex_` entry is identified by the citation key and the (first 50 characters of the sanitised) document title, as specified by your database. Of the three missed entries above, `bibupdate_` thinks that the first and third are preprints (they are not marked with an `!`) and that the final article should already have been published. With the entry that `bibupdate_` found, only the publisher field was changed to include the city of publication.

In *\*warning mode\**, with the `-q` option, you are "warned" whenever changes are made to an entry or when the paper is not found in the external database. That is, when papers are found (with changes) or when they are missed and `bibupdate_` thinks that they are not preprints. In *\*quiet mode\**, with the `-qq` option, the program only reports when something goes wrong.

`-w LEN --wrap LEN`      Wrap bibtex fields to specified width

Limits the maximum line length in the output BibTeX\_ file. In theory this is supposed to make it easier to compare the updated BibTeX\_ file with the original one, however, in practise this doesn't always work.

## Known issues

`bibupdate` reads BibTeX files using a small number of regular expressions so there may be some corner cases where it fails to extract all of the field entries.

There are a small number of cases where `bibupdate` fails to correctly identify papers that are listed in [MathSciNet](#). These failures occur for the following reasons:

- Apostrophes: Searching for a title that contains, for example, "James's Conjecture" confuses [mrlookup](#).
- Ambiguous spelling: Issues arise when there are multiple ways to spell a given author's name. This can often happen if the surname involves accents (such as Koenig and K\`onig). Most of the time accents themselves are not a problem because the AMS is [LaTeX](#) aware.
- Pages numbers: electronic journals, in particular, often have strange page numbers (for example "Art. ID rnm032, 24"). `bibupdate` assumes that page numbers are always given in the format like 4--42.
- Occasionally MathReviews combines two or more closely related articles. This makes it difficult to search for them.

All of these problems are due to idiosyncrasies with [mrlookup](#) so there is not much that we can do about them.

## Installation

You need to have [Python](#) installed. In principle, this program should work on any system that supports [Python](#), however, I only promise that it will work on an up-to-date mac or Linux system. In the event that it does not install I may not be able to help you as I will not have access to your system.

From the command line type:

```
pip install bibupdate
```

Instead of pip, you should also be able to use `easy_install`. The program should run on python 2.6+ and python 3. You can also clone or [download](#) the git repository and work directly with the source.

## Support

This program is being made available primarily on the basis that it might be useful to others. I wrote the program in my spare time and I will support it in my spare time.

## To do

- More intelligent searches using [MathSciNet](#)
- Add lookup using MRef and, when an entry is not found, allow additional searches
- Fix the wrapping of bibtex fields.

## Author

Andrew Mathas

[bibupdate](#) Version 2.0dev

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