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This semester I worked on a process where multiple qualitative sources (journal articles, newspaper, text-based sources), could be analysed at once to find any shared themes or topics. And then use this information to create insightful annotations and tags to store them. This makes it easier to refer back to these sources in future without losing information, especially when research takes place over a long period of time.

This process is helpful for students/researchers in the social sciences who are dealing with large quantities of textual sources. It responds to problems of disorganisation and mismanagement of sources as well as potential loss of information and data. It is a quicker way to find existing links between sources and to store them more efficiently.

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For this process I used the web-based application: Voyant Tools and the reference management software: Zotero. Essentially the process involves comparing the sources in Voyant and discovering what topics they cover and how this may contribute to whatever stage of research development of the thesis. From there, extracting the source and metadata into Zotero where additional notes can be added. This groups the sources together and keeps information in the one place. This can be gradually added to so by the end of the thesis, the entire library of sources and their information is stored there, ready for the automatic generation of references/citations.

This is particularly helpful when trying to find connections between sources to complete tasks such as literature reviews or comparative analysis. This is something quite prominent in my own discipline of politics and international relations, but may also be useful in other disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology, history etc.

The current result of this process is not as automated as it could be. But it still provides a more efficient process of identifying and storing sources. There is an indication of the relevance and use of each source and where they may fit into the research process from the very start. This is something which may not have been possible previously without thoroughly reading the sources first.