

Zotero for Research: Insights into Managing Sources

Digital Integration Teaching Initiative
Dipa Desai, Shannon Peifer, and Mel Williams
History of Boston
Professor Uta Poiger, Fall 2025

Class Discussion: Managing Sources

Setting up a system to keep track of your sources is an important first step for academic research. Let's think about these questions:

- How do you manage your sources when you are doing research?
- Where do you look for sources?
- How do you save your sources?
- How do you remind yourself what each source is about and how you plan to use it?

Workshop Agenda

- Objectives
- Why are citation management tools useful?
- Introduction to Zotero
- Important Zotero vocabulary
- Tutorial
- In-class hands on activity with Zotero

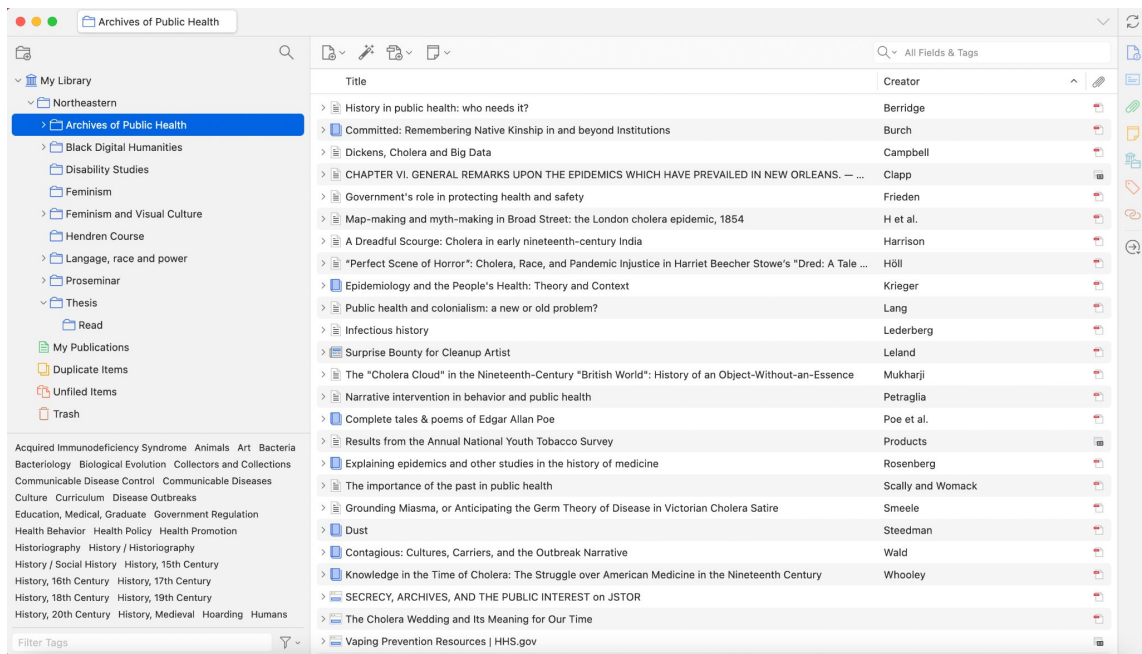
Slides & handout available at <https://bit.ly/fa25-poiger-hist1232-multi>

Workshop Objectives

- Understand how to use citation management software to organize research materials
- Understand Zotero's functions and features
- Define several important functions of Zotero and citation management, including libraries, ISBN, tags, and more.
- Input bibliographic information both manually and automatically into Zotero
- Transform a library into a Works Cited page

Why Use Citation Management Tools?

Citation management tools provide researchers with the ability to organize their primary and secondary sources, easily create citations and works cited pages for their research, and organize/maintain notes.



What is Zotero?

“Zotero is a free, open-source research tool that helps you collect, organize, and analyze research and share it in a variety of ways” (“About”, Zotero).

- Stores citation information on the cloud
- Finds bibliographic information for sources
- Provides flexible methods for organizing your bibliographies (libraries, tags, notes, etc.)
- Stores PDFs (even annotated PDFs!) or links to the source
- Provides outputs of your citation information
- Connects to GoogleDrive, Chrome, Microsoft Word, and other applications

Introduction to Zotero

Instructions on Installing Zotero

- Install Zotero
 - Download Zotero on the [Zotero download webpage](#). Be sure to also install the Zotero Connector for your browser.
 - **Mac:** Open the .dmg you downloaded and drag Zotero to the Applications folder. Then run Zotero from the Applications folder and add it to your Dock. After installing Zotero, you can eject and delete the .dmg file.
 - **Windows:** Run the setup program you downloaded.
- Create an Account
- **Note:** Your Zotero libraries and info are stored in your Zotero account (not on your computer)

Zotero Vocabulary

Here's some tool-specific vocabulary to know when navigating Zotero:

- **My library:** individual libraries that can only be edited on your account
- **Collection:** Folder-like organization for sources that can be grouped by course, topic, project, etc. Items can be copied to multiple collections.
- **Sub-collection:** Folder nested within a main collection
- **Group libraries:** collaborative libraries
- **Info:** the bibliographic information about a particular source
- **Notes:** your own notes taken about a source
- **Tags:** keywords chosen to organize and arrange sources

Zotero Anatomy

Your individual & group libraries

Your keyword tags

Toolbars

Information about an individual source

The screenshot shows the Zotero desktop application interface. Red arrows point to the following components:

- Your individual & group libraries:** Points to the left sidebar's library list, which includes 'My Library', 'Northeastern', 'Archives of Public Health', 'Black Digital Humanities', 'Disability Studies', 'Feminism', 'Feminism and Visual Culture', 'Hendren Course', 'Language, race and power', 'Proseminar', 'Thesis', 'Read', 'My Publications', 'Duplicate Items', 'Unfiled Items', and 'Trash'.
- Your keyword tags:** Points to the 'Filter Tags' section at the bottom of the sidebar, which lists various tags like 'Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome', 'Animals', 'Art', 'Bacteria', 'Bacteriology', 'Biological Evolution', 'Collectors and Collections', 'Communicable Disease Control', 'Communicable Diseases', 'Culture', 'Curriculum', 'Disease Outbreaks', 'Education, Medical, Graduate', 'Government Regulation', 'Health Behavior', 'Health Policy', 'Health Promotion', 'Historiography', 'History / Historiography', 'History / Social History', 'History, 15th Century', 'History, 16th Century', 'History, 17th Century', 'History, 18th Century', 'History, 19th Century', 'History, 20th Century', 'History, Medieval', 'Hoarding', and 'Humans'.
- Toolbars:** Points to the top toolbar and the right sidebar toolbar.
- Information about an individual source:** Points to the 'Info' panel on the right, which displays details for the selected item 'History in public health: who needs it?' by Berridge.
- Your list of sources in a particular library:** Points to the central list of sources, which includes items like 'History in public health: who needs it?', 'Committed: Remembering Native Kinship in and beyond Institutions', 'Dickens, Cholera and Big Data', 'CHAPTER VI. GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE EPIDEMICS WHICH HAVE PREV...', 'Government's role in protecting health and safety', 'Map-making and myth-making in Broad Street: the London cholera epidemic, ...', 'A Dreadful Scourge: Cholera in early nineteenth-century India', '"Perfect Scene of Horror": Cholera, Race, and Pandemic Injustice in Harriet B...', 'Epidemiology and the People's Health: Theory and Context', 'Public health and colonialism: a new or old problem?', 'Infectious history', 'Surprise Bounty for Cleanup Artist', 'The "Cholera Cloud" in the Nineteenth-Century "British World": History of an ...', 'Narrative intervention in behavior and public health', 'Complete tales & poems of Edgar Allan Poe', 'Results from the Annual National Youth Tobacco Survey', 'Explaining epidemics and other studies in the history of medicine', 'The importance of the past in public health', 'Grounding Miasma, or Anticipating the Germ Theory of Disease in Victorian C...', 'Dust', 'Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative', 'Knowledge in the Time of Cholera: The Struggle over American Medicine in th...', 'SECRECY, ARCHIVES, AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST on JSTOR', 'The Cholera Wedding and Its Meaning for Our Time', and 'Vaping Prevention Resources | HHS.gov'.

Demo

Collecting Sources

Zotero is most useful when you are collecting sources. So, let's talk about finding appropriate sources.

What are **databases**, **journals**, and **peer-reviewed articles**?

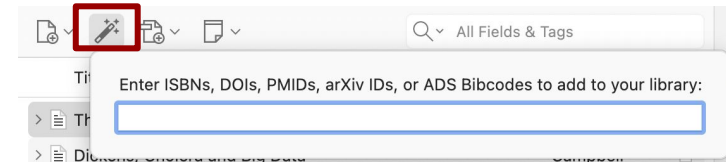
- [Northeastern Library](#)
- [Subject Guides](#)
- [Northeastern Databases](#)

For class, you should have found an article related to your research.

Option 1: Add by Identifier

The easiest way to add sources to either a personal or group library is to “add by identifier” using the magic wand button in the top menu bar. You can add sources by entering the:

- ISBN: international standard book number
- DOI: digital object identifier
- PMID: PubMed identifier
- arXiv ID: from repository of electronic preprints & postprints
- ADS Bibcode: from NASA ADS Abstract and Service database



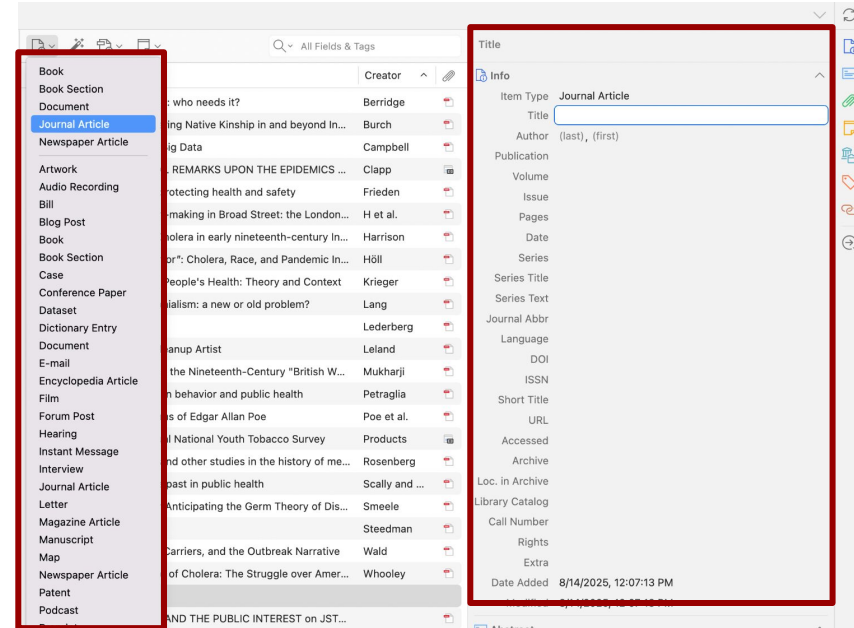
Option 2: Drag and Drop PDFs

If you already have a PDF of an article downloaded, you can **drag** and **drop** the PDF to Zotero and it will automatically fill in all the information for that document. Note: Information pulled may be incomplete or not fully accurate, so always double-check.

The PDF, however, needs to have metadata attached to it. Make sure to check because not every PDF include this information, but most of the ones you get from library databases should.

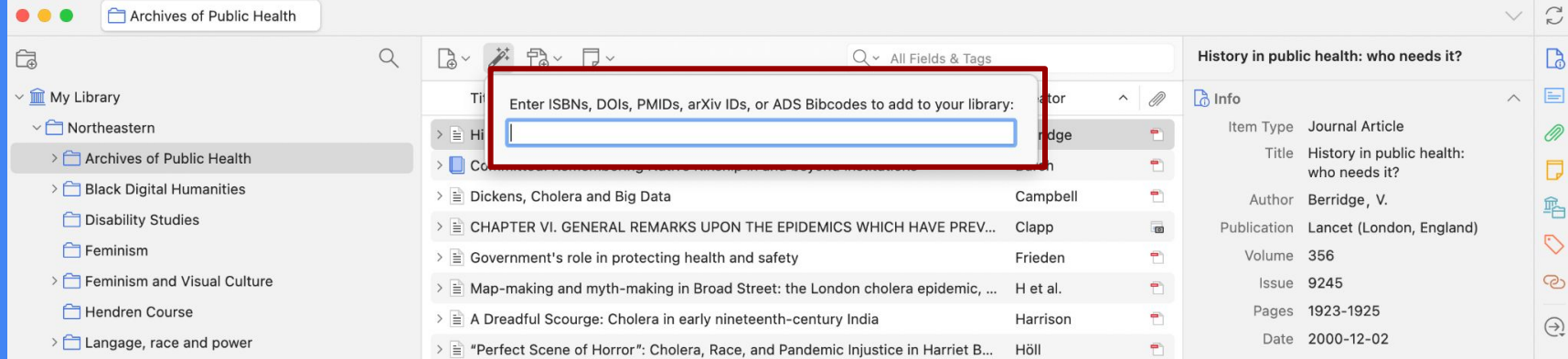
Option 3: Input Information Manually

1. Select the “New Item” button and select source type
 2. Enter bibliographic information
 3. Use the “Notes” field to keep track of important information
 4. Use the “Tags” to create keywords.
- Do not overload yourself with keywords. They should be chosen with purpose to help find similar content and organize your sources.



Practice Adding Items

1. In your Zotero dashboard, create a working folder in your library
2. Look for the DOI number (unique identifier for scholarly articles) or ISBN number (unique identifier for books)
3. Click “Add Items by Identifier(s)” and paste the DOI or ISBN number



Practice Inputting Manually

Now, let's practice with an item you can't import: Macbeth

In your personal library folder:

- Determine the type of source
- Find the correct citation information
- Fill out the information
- Attach the PDF by dragging and dropping the file onto the related source

Bibliographic Metadata

Info: bibliographic info

Notes: your notes (also sometimes notes/tags are included when you enter ISBN/DOIs)

Tags: keywords (also sometimes keywords are included when you use ISBN or DOIs)

History in public health: who needs it?	
Info	
Item type	Journal Article
Title	History in public health: who needs it?
Author	Berridge, V.
Publication	Lancet (London, England)
Volume	356
Issue	9245
Pages	1923-1925
Date	2000-12-02
Series	
Series Title	
Series Text	
Journal Abbr	Lancet
Language	eng
DOI	10.1016/S0140-6736(00)03271-2
ISSN	0140-6736
Short Title	History in public health
URL	
Accessed	
Archive	
Loc. in Archive	
Library Catalog	PubMed
Call Number	
Rights	
Extra	PMID: 11130400
Date Added	1/15/2025, 4:58:34 PM
Modified	1/15/2025, 4:58:36 PM

Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!

Zotero Reader: Annotations

Zotero allows you to annotate your materials within the application.

Within the PDF viewer, you can:

- Highlight or underline text
- Add sticky notes or text
- Create snapshots
- Draw (great for tablets)
- Extract annotations as a Zotero note
- Or, add your own “Note” linked to the

PDF as part of the sources info

Annotation toolbar



Zotero Group Library

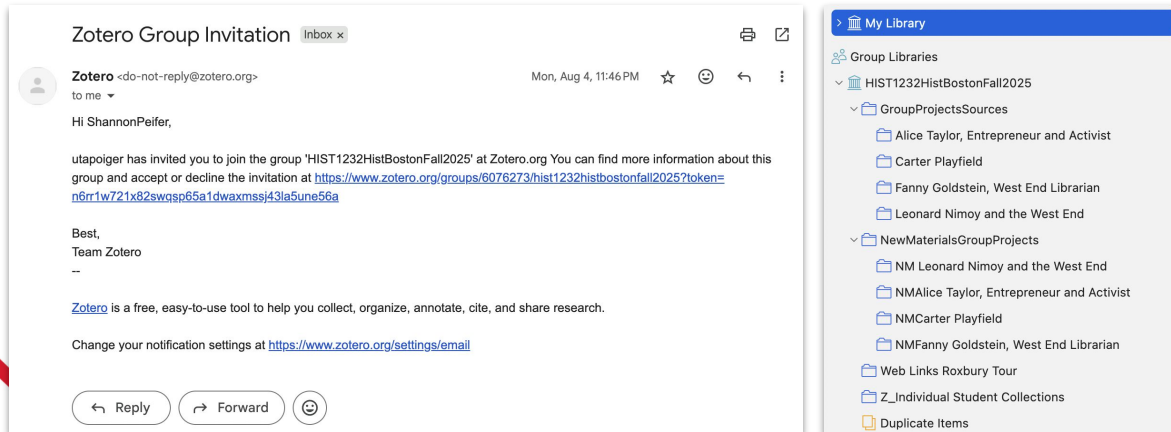
Collaborating in a Group Library

Best practices (from [UC Berkeley Library Guide](#))

- Create a personal library as a holding zone for references. Clean up the metadata here before adding it to the group library.
- Use tags to label papers so you can easily identify and gather items
- Before you start work, sync your library so you are working with the most recent version
- Rename your PDF files to formats that include citation information for easier identification

Accessing the Group Library

Professor Poiger has created a group library for your class to collaborate and gather sources related to your projects. Once you've shared your Zotero username with Professor Poiger, you should receive an email from Zotero inviting you to the Group. Follow the link to Zotero and you should see the new group appear in your left side panel.



Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!

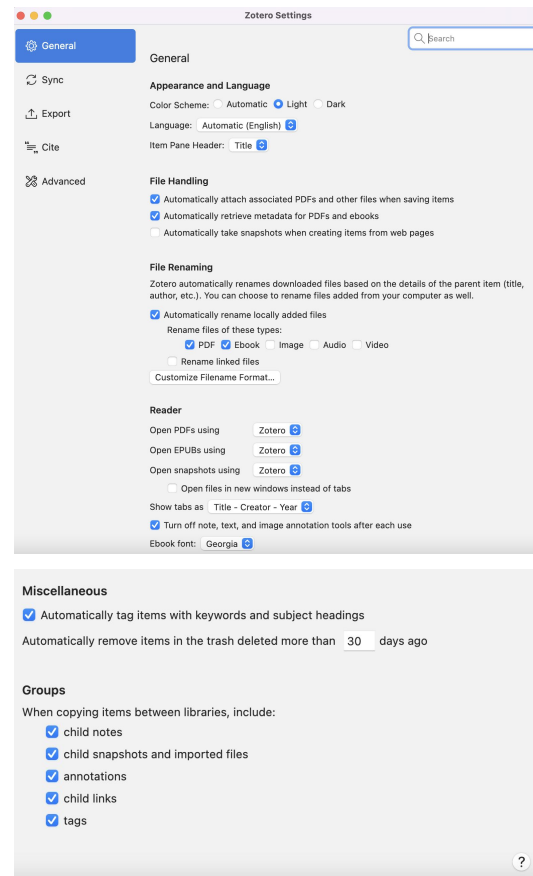
Practice Working in a Group Library

1. Add the paper you brought for class to your individual library
2. Clean up metadata
3. Rename file with metadata information (if necessary)
4. Sync group library to ensure working with up-to-date version
5. Copy to the group library
6. Tag appropriately
7. Add annotations
8. Sync changes

Setting Preferences

Before you start working with Zotero, check that your preferences are set up how you want.

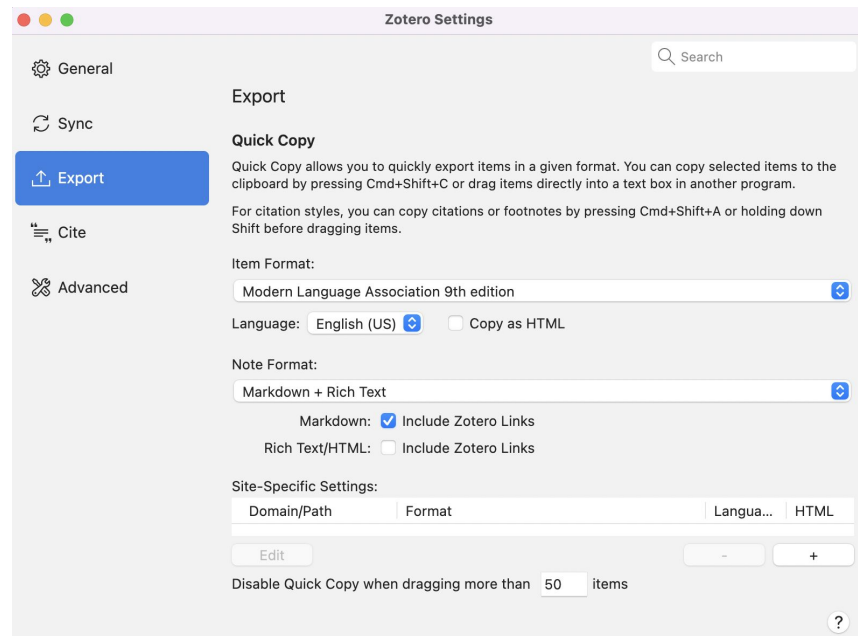
- Edit appearance
- Manage file attachments and metadata
- Customize File renaming
- Set Reader preferences
- Allow automatic tags



Setting Preferences: Exporting

You can also set your preferences for exporting items from your library.

- For “Quick Copy,” select the appropriate citation format.
- This is helpful for when you copy selected items to your clipboard and paste the citations directly into Word, Google Docs, etc.

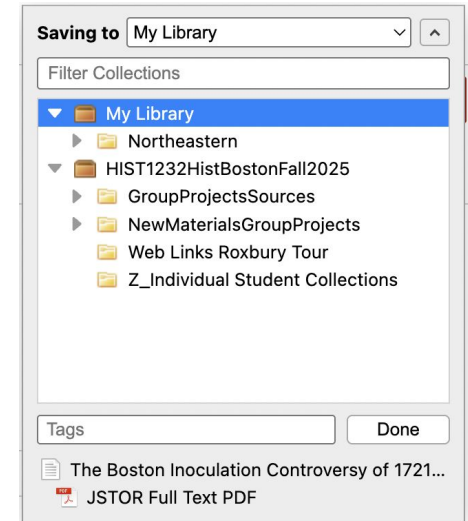
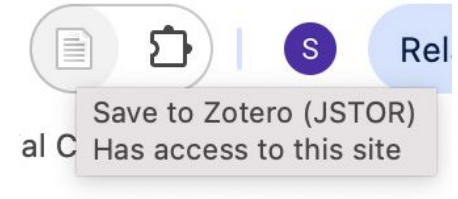


Exporting your Bibliography

1. As a bibliography saved directly into your clipboard
 - a. Right-click (PC) or Command-select multiple items (Mac) from your library
 - b. Select “Create bibliography from collection”
 - c. Choose your citation format
 - d. Paste the bibliography into your works cited or references page
2. As a CSV file (which can be opened in Excel)
3. As an export to other Citation Management tool formats (EndNotes, for example)

Zotero Web Browser Extension

- In Chrome or Firefox, there is a **Zotero browser extension** that you can download and connect to your Zotero account. Then you can easily save bibliographic information by clicking on the “Zotero” button on your toolbar (make sure the correct library is selected from the dropdown). It will also save the HTML link or the PDF.
- **Note:** Always double check that the citation information is correct in your Zotero library (some websites do not provide accurate metadata)



Zotero with Google Docs and Word

Your Zotero can be connected to your Google Drive account or Microsoft Word. While you are writing a paper, you can use the Zotero plugin to create your bibliography or add footnotes for you!

Note: Always double-check that all the bibliographic information is correct and follows the appropriate citation format (You can set this in your preferences.)

Class Discussion

- What did you find helpful about using Zotero?
- What did you find challenging about using Zotero?
- How might you use Zotero in the future outside of this class?

Additional Resources

- Zotero Support Documentation and Forum:
 - [Support Documentation](#)
 - [Discussion Forums](#)
- [Northeastern Library Subject Guide](#)
- [Additional plug-ins](#)

Thank you!

— **Taught by DITI Fellows** Dipa Desai, Shannon Peifer, and Mel Williams

—**Developed by** Cara Marta Messina, Juniper Johnson, Shannon Peifer, and Mel Williams

- Course materials: <https://bit.ly/fa25-poiger-hist1232-multi>
- Schedule an appointment with us! <https://bit.ly/diti-meeting>
- To give us feedback: <https://bit.ly/diti-feedback>
- If you have any questions, contact us at: nulab.info@gmail.com