

Zotero basics

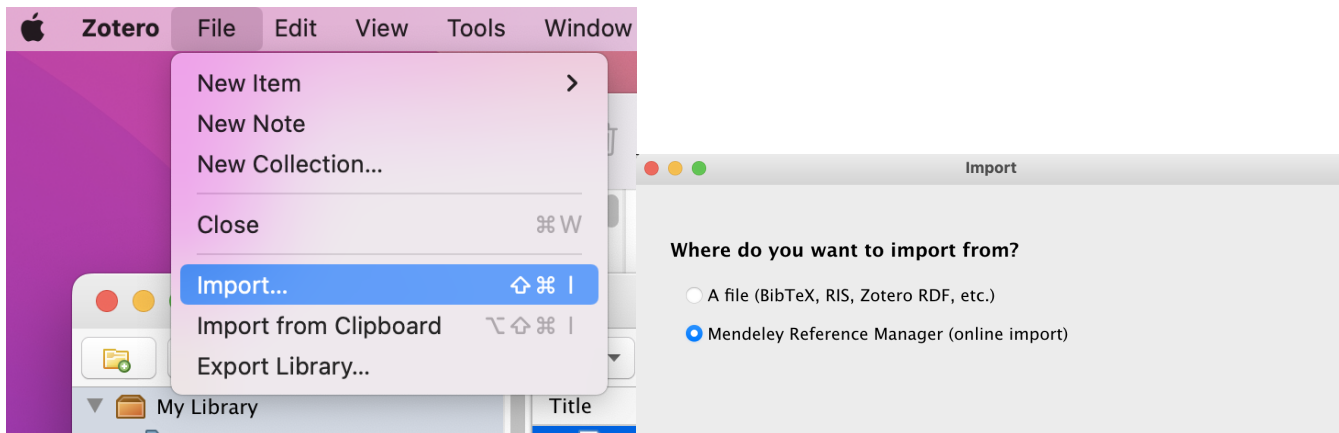
Updated 8/10/26

Downloadable version here: <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/365-days-of-science/referencemanagement/>

A reference manager helps you easily insert formatted citations. There are a variety of (mostly free) tools (Mendeley, EndNote, ReadCube, etc.), but I use Zotero personally and for my classes. A few reasons I use Zotero (though I don't know how many of these are Zotero specific)...

- 1) It's free (though I ended up upgrading to unlimited storage)
- 2) It has a really convenient Chrome extension to download references with links and PDFs when available directly from a site
- 3) You can easily just drag a PDF into the library and it will extract the needed entry info
- 4) You can add entries in a large number of formats and ways
- 5) It has web and desktop versions that are easy to organize and search
- 6) It integrates nicely with Google Docs and Word to easily make in-text citations and bibliographies
- 7) I got access to a group library of articles (one of the motivating factors for my switch from Mendeley)
- 8) I can make group libraries for my lab and for my classes to share papers with them
- 9) There's an iPad app

I transferred over from Mendeley a couple years ago. It ended up being ridiculously easy because there's an option to import from Mendeley (you can also import from other formats)!

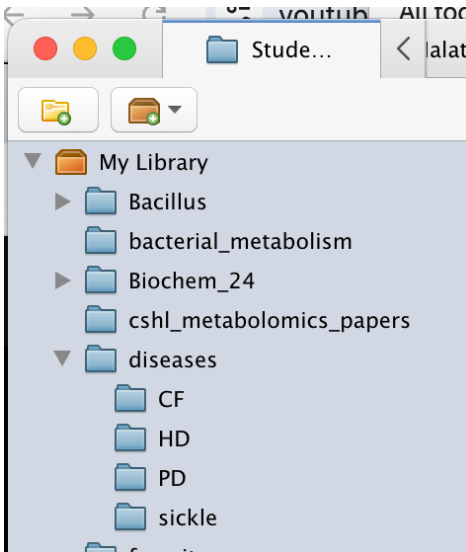


I really like it. But you find what works for you. The important thing is just to use it!

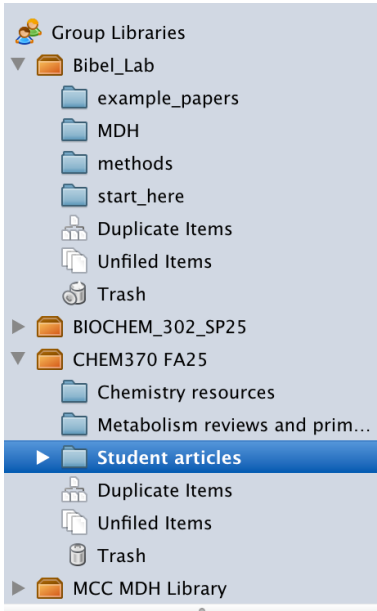
This guide will help you navigate Zotero, add papers to your Zotero library, and generate citations and bibliographies. Note that for the citations and bibliographies you will need to be using desktop versions of Word and Zotero.

Organizing your Zotero library

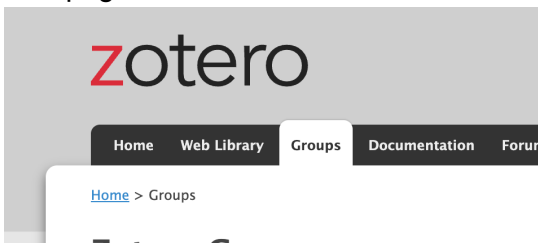
You can organize your library into folders and subfolders (and articles can be in multiple folders (collections) – just drag their entries in). *Note: articles are not automatically placed in parent folders, so you need to drag them in separately if you want them there.*



Zotero group libraries are a great way to share papers with others.



You can also make your own group libraries and send people invites to your groups on your Zotero account web page



In your library (even without opening an article) and in an article's tab, you can open the right sidebar to get more information:

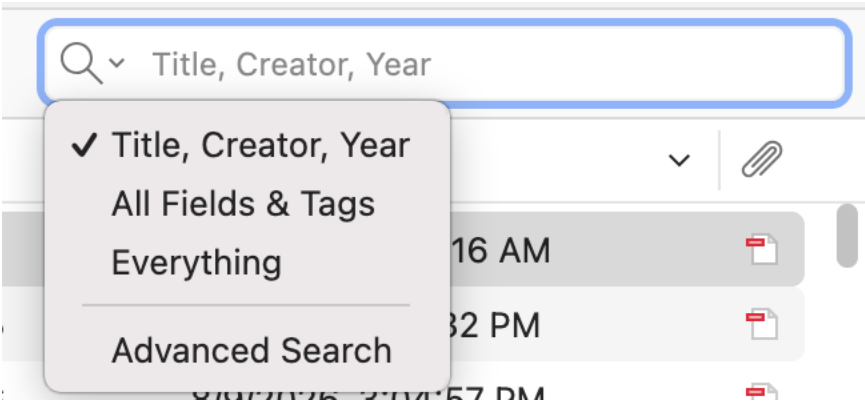


This includes citation info as well as links to open online, open the PDF in a new window, drag the PDF somewhere on your computer, and preview the PDF.

You can also right-click on an article to find the PDF in your Finder.

When reading an article, you can find it in your library by going to File → Show in Library

There's a search bar to search by author, date, key word, etc. as well as the abstracts and the full texts.

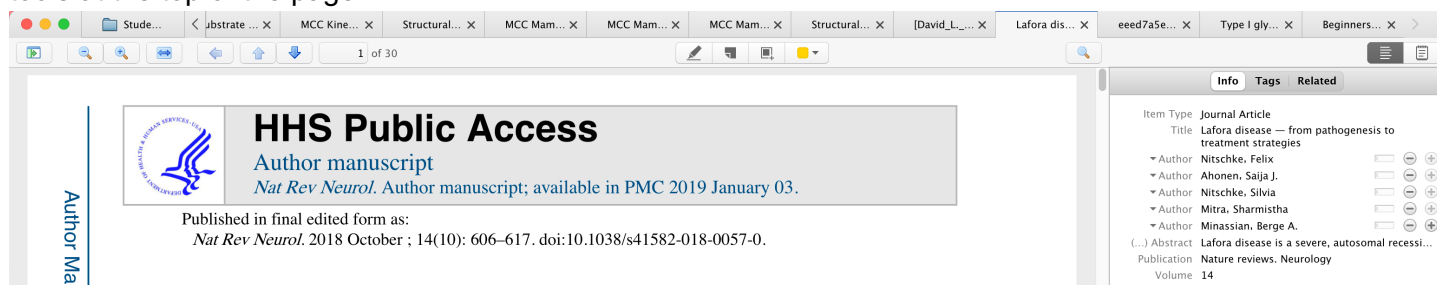


And you can click on the header tabs to toggle between sorting by date published, date added, etc.

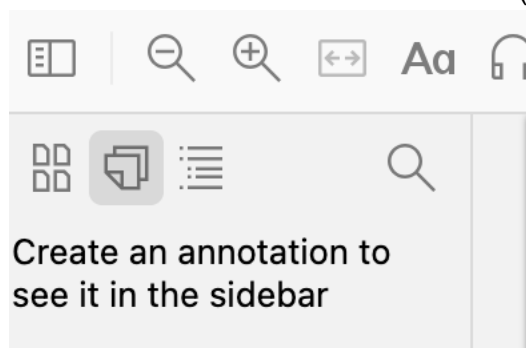
Title	Creator	Date	Date Added	⌵	📎
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Reading articles in Zotero

When you open an article (by double-clicking the entry in your library), you can make annotations using the tools at the top of the page

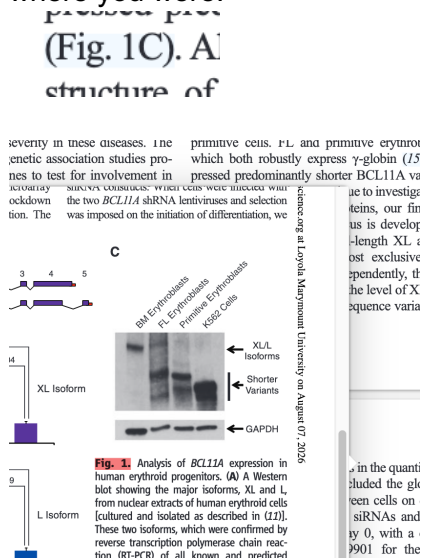


You can view annotations and outlines (when available) in the left sidebar



You can adjust the format things are displayed using the icons above the left sidebar.

Depending on how well the software interpreted the files, you can scroll over a Figure reference or in-text citation to get a preview of it (if it's highlighted blue), click to jump to it, and click the back arrow to return to where you were.



Here's how you add papers and other links and documents to your Zotero

1) With a browser extension. . .

cles/76908

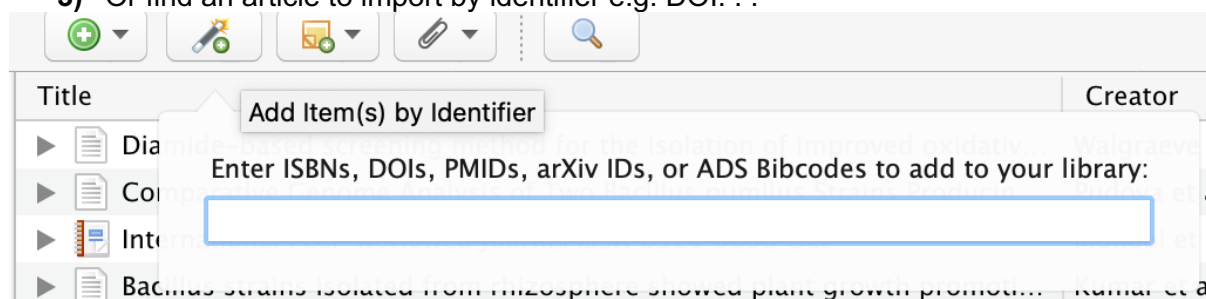


Sometimes it appears as a Z symbol, others as a piece of paper, depending on how much access Zotero has

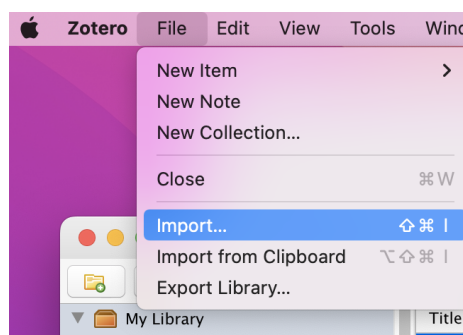


2) You can also just drag in a PDF into your library. . .

3) Or find an article to import by identifier e.g. DOI. . .



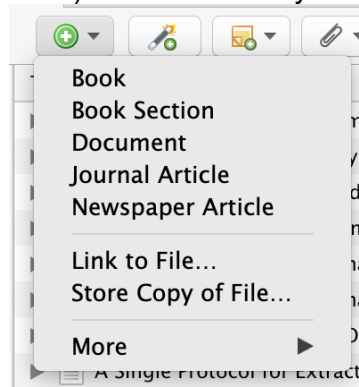
4) Or Import citations into your library from a variety of sources (BibTeX, RIS, etc.). . .



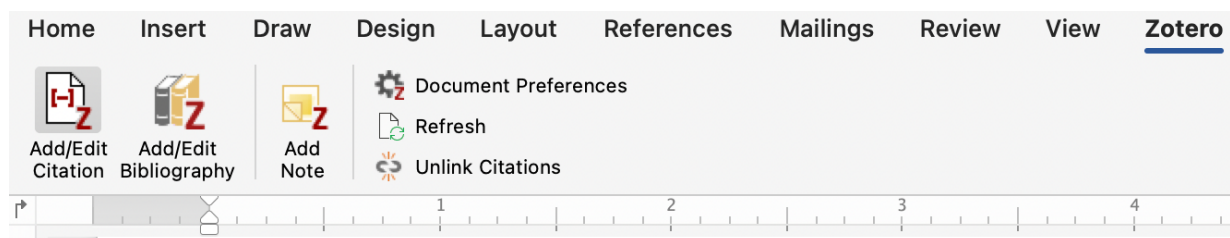
Where do you want to import from?

- ☒ A file (BibTeX, RIS, Zotero RDF, etc.)
- ☐ Mendeley Reference Manager (online import)

5) Or add an entry manually. . .



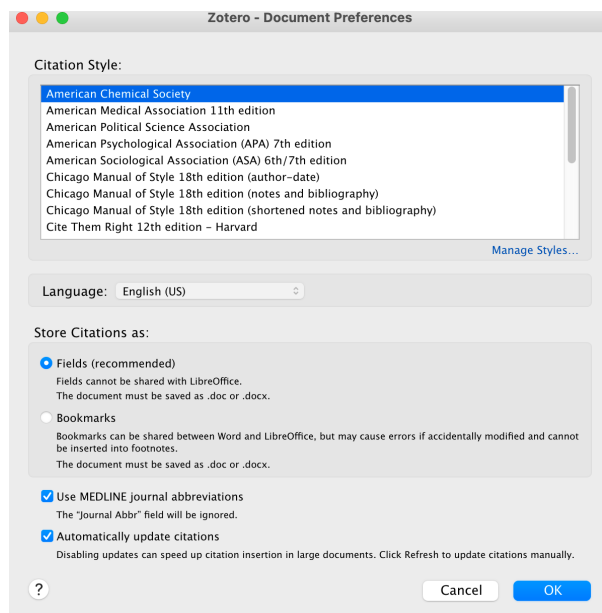
Here's how you insert an in-text citation & bibliography/works cited in Microsoft Word using Zotero



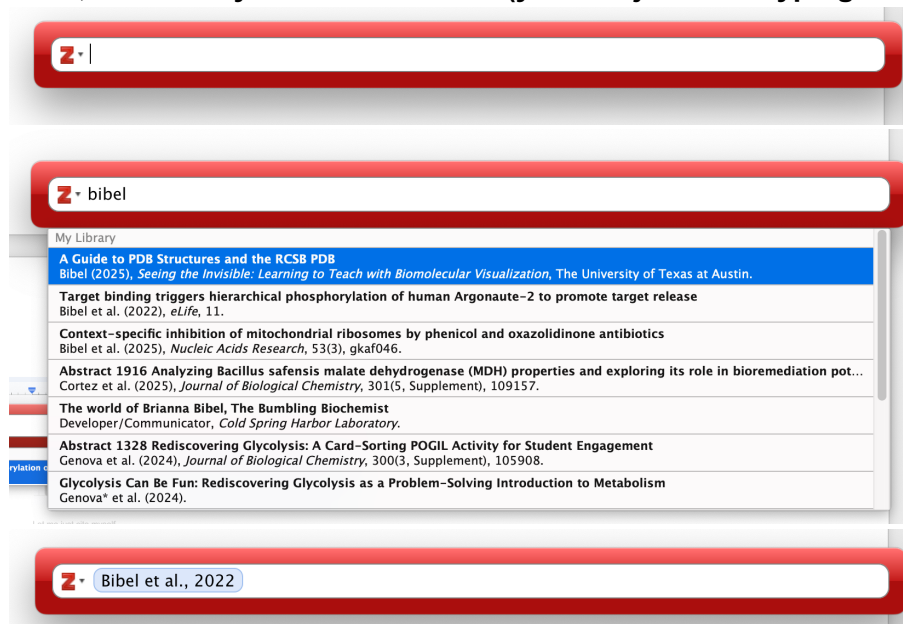
Let me just cite my grad school self as an example. . .

Make sure you have the desktop version of Zotero open

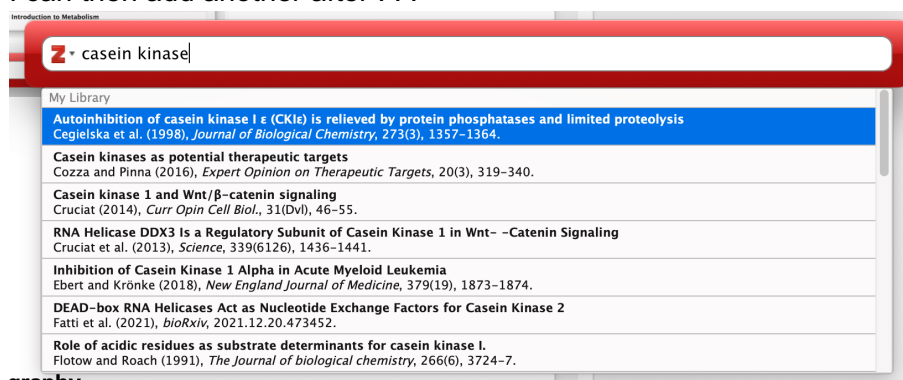
First, it will ask you to choose a style. We use ACS (American Chemical Society) in my classes but you can choose other ones and even re-choose later.



Then, it will ask you to search for it (you can just start typing author, title, etc.)

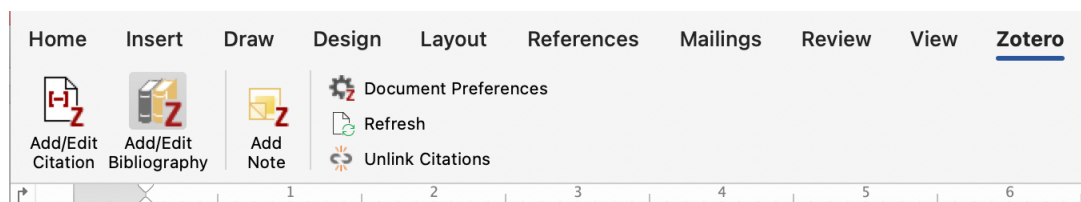


This is the end result: ¹
I can then add another after . . .



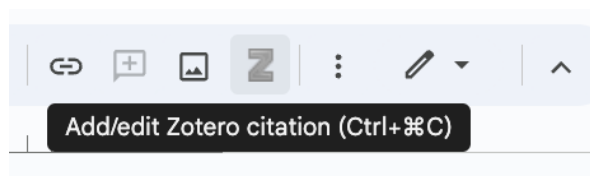
End result: ²

And if I insert a bibliography. . .



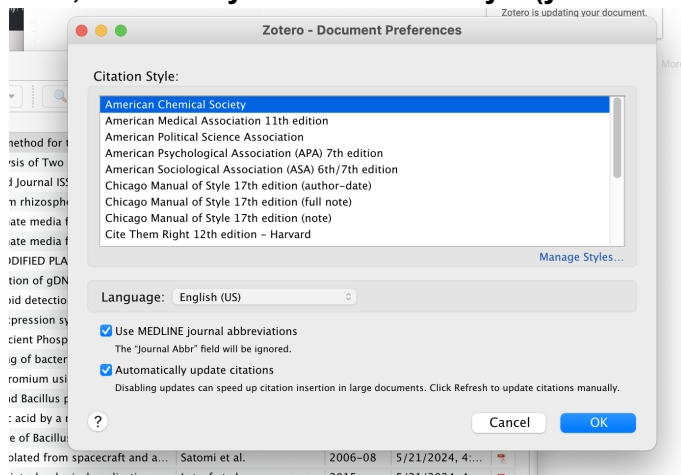
- (1) Bibel, B.; Elkayam, E.; Silletti, S.; Komives, E. A.; Joshua-Tor, L. Target Binding Triggers Hierarchical Phosphorylation of Human Argonaute-2 to Promote Target Release. *eLife* **2022**, *11*.
<https://doi.org/10.7554/ELIFE.76908>.
- (2) Cegielska, A.; Gietzen, K. F.; Rivers, A.; Virshup, D. M. Autoinhibition of Casein Kinase I ε (CKIε) Is Relieved by Protein Phosphatases and Limited Proteolysis. *J. Biol. Chem.* **1998**, *273* (3), 1357–1364.
<https://doi.org/10.1074/jbc.273.3.1357>.

Here's how you insert a reference & bibliography/works cited in Google Docs using Zotero

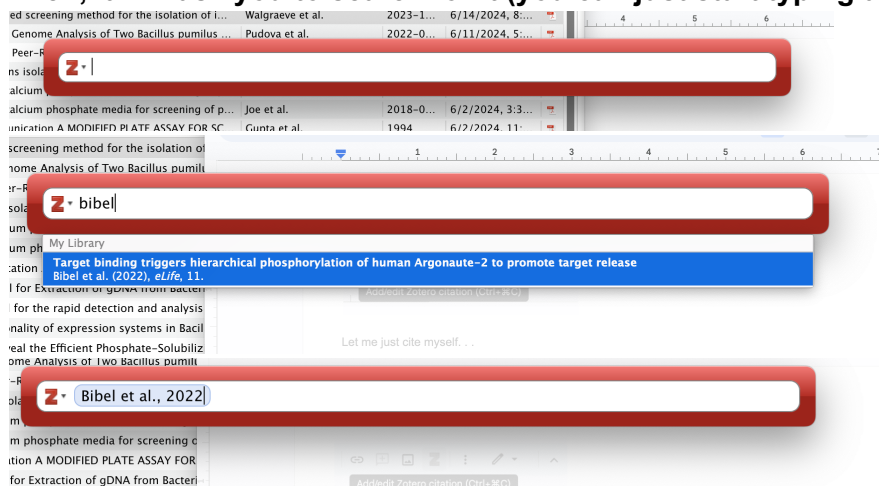


Let me just cite my grad school self as an example. . .
Make sure you have the desktop version open

First, it will ask you to choose a style (you can change it later)



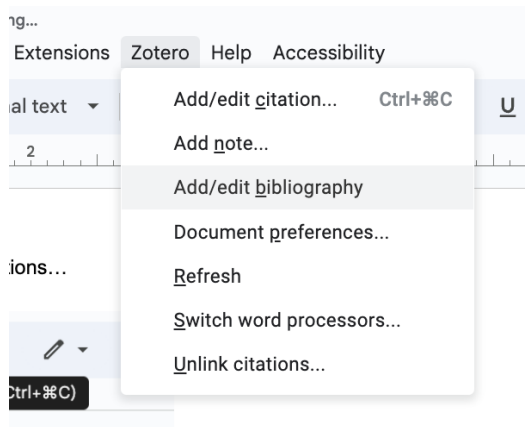
Then, it will ask you to search for it (you can just start typing author, title, etc.)



This is the end result: ¹

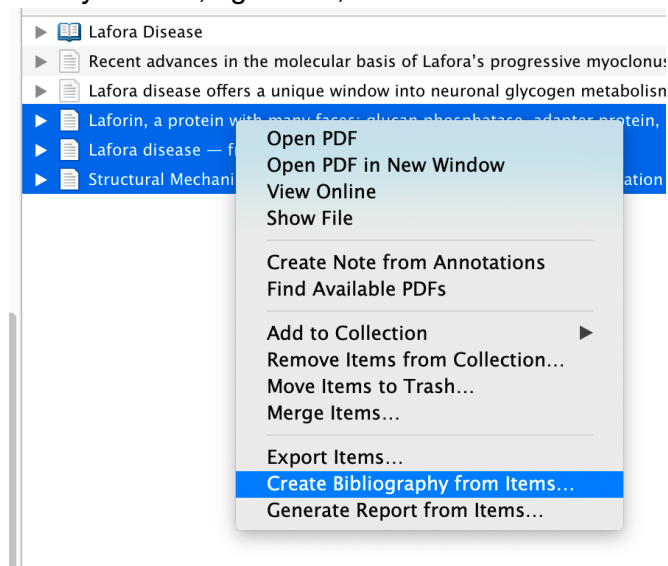
Added another after . . . ²

And if you insert a bibliography. . .



- (1) Cegielska, A.; Gietzen, K. F.; Rivers, A.; Virshup, D. M. Autoinhibition of Casein Kinase I ϵ (CKI ϵ) Is Relieved by Protein Phosphatases and Limited Proteolysis. *J. Biol. Chem.* **1998**, 273 (3), 1357–1364. <https://doi.org/10.1074/jbc.273.3.1357>.
- (2) Bibel, B.; Elkayam, E.; Silletti, S.; Komives, E. A.; Joshua-Tor, L. Target Binding Triggers Hierarchical Phosphorylation of Human Argonaute-2 to Promote Target Release. *eLife* **2022**, 11. <https://doi.org/10.7554/ELIFE.76908>.

You can also export citations and bibliographies directly from my Zotero library to my clipboard if you select the ones you want, right click, and choose “Create Bibliography from Items...”



(1)

Gentry, M. S.; Romá-Mateo, C.; Sanz, P. Laforin, a Protein with Many Faces: Glucan Phosphatase, Adapter Protein, et Alii. *FEBS J* **2013**, *280* (2), 525–537. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1742-4658.2012.08549.x>.

(2)

Nitschke, F.; Ahonen, S. J.; Nitschke, S.; Mitra, S.; Minassian, B. A. Lafora Disease — from Pathogenesis to Treatment Strategies. *Nat Rev Neurol* **2018**, *14* (10), 606–617. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41582-018-0057-0>.

(3)

Raththagala, M.; Brewer, M. K.; Parker, M. W.; Sherwood, A. R.; Wong, B. K.; Hsu, S.; Bridges, T. M.; Paasch, B. C.; Hellman, L. M.; Husodo, S.; Meekins, D. A.; Taylor, A. O.; Turner, B. D.; Auger, K. D.; Dukhande, V. V.; Chakravarthy, S.; Sanz, P.; Woods, V. L.; Li, S.; Vander Kooi, C. W.; Gentry, M. S. Structural Mechanism of Laforin Function in Glycogen Dephosphorylation and Lafora Disease. *Molecular Cell* **2015**, *57* (2), 261–272. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.molcel.2014.11.020>.

Additional resources

- Use of a reference manager program (e.g. Mendeley, Zotero) with this downloadable Zotero guide <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/365-days-of-science/referencemanagement/>
 - Video guide: <https://youtu.be/9ViP3DU7Xvk>
- Finding, organizing, reading, & taking notes on scientific papers, especially when starting a new project <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/365-days-of-science/papernotes/>
- Using InterLibrary Loan to request papers through your library <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/365-days-of-science/quick-tip-use-interlibrary-loan-to-access-materials-you-think-you-cant-access/>
- The types & layout of scientific articles: <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/365-days-of-science/papertypes/> & <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/365-days-of-science/the-art-and-science-of-reading-science-articles/>
- Peer review and open access: <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/365-days-of-science/open-access-journal-articles-and-preprints/>
- Reading science articles with a purpose: <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/365-days-of-science/strategicreading/> & <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/365-days-of-science/reading-science-articles-some-advice/>
- If you go to grad school or otherwise do a lot of research reading, I recommend you keep a spreadsheet to keep track of key information from each paper. Here's a template I like to use: <https://bit.ly/litspreadsheet>
- Reading & writing articles, etc. playlist: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUWsCDtjESrFIE1UwOdgvzqb5G1AjZ9Wc&si=YzBZyR25Nb2yXBiv>
- More on the hidden curriculum of academic science: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUWsCDtjESrH10HorjPfP_AreNCf6S4rL & <https://thebumblingbiochemist.com/hiddencurriculum/>
- More trainee-related content: <https://bit.ly/gradpostdocetc> & YouTube playlists: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUWsCDtjESrE5by6kK_GsGNPQmdaVynz