Organising your reading

Keeping track of what you've read and the notes you've made can easily overwhelm you. When it comes to unit or assignment reading lists, cross off items as you read them. Organise the rest of your reading both physically and virtually. In physical terms, keep printed articles and paper notes in folders organised by unit, topic, or assignment. In virtual terms, keep your notes in a folder on your hard drive (and/or USB) and your list of readings in a Word document, or use reference management software. And always keep backups!

Reference management software

The Library licenses a couple of reference management systems:

→ RefWorks – web-based, for all staff and students
→ EndNote – downloadable software available to staff and postgraduate students

Other tools and software are available, including some free web-based options and a Reference Manager in Microsoft Word. Visit the Library's Referencing and Citation page to find out more.

If nothing else, keep a running list of your reading in a word processing document so you can easily refer back and find the correct citation.

Things to remember:

→ Keep a record of everything you read, together with your notes if possible.
→ Record citations in the correct referencing style for your discipline (programs like RefWorks and EndNote can usually format these for you, provided you have put in the information correctly, so check for accuracy).
→ Import citations from database records where possible, but always check for accuracy.
→ Find a way of distinguishing what you've read from what you haven't read. Prioritise readings if necessary, using criteria such as currency and relevance.
→ Don't be overwhelmed by the amount of information out there. With careful pre-reading strategies (PDF, 256 kB) you will be able to prioritise your reading and focus on finding what's relevant for you and/or your assignment.
→ Regularly save electronic notes and be aware that you will lose access to electronic textbooks at the end of the semester.

See also:

→ General note-taking advice (PDF, 134 kB)
→ Evaluate resources using APPEAL (video, 6:26)

References

Taylor, A., & Turner, J. (2014). *Academic reading: Handbook for students*. Learnhigher. Retrieved November 18, 2016, from http://www.learnhigher.ac.uk/research-skills/reading/academic-reading-handbook-for-students/

UniStep Guide: Making the transition to university (10th ed.). (2013). Sydney, Australia: Hub for Academic Literacy and Learning (HALL), Learning and Teaching Unit, University of Western Sydney.