

Streamline Collaboration and Enhance Productivity

by Working in the Cloud

Lisa A Hartman, MLIS, Frostburg State University
MLA/DLA Conference, May 6-8, 2015

Introduction

Cloud-based applications such as GoogleDocs, ZohoWriter, and Evernote provide a platform that is convenient and accessible for the individual.

These apps benefit collaborative projects in the same way, but also provide a simplified, more efficient means of editing shared files (documents, spreadsheets, etc.) in real time. Their use eliminates the confusion that can result from multiple versions of the same document.

They often allow simultaneous editing, so that collaborators do not have to wait until another is finished and the "read only" message no longer appears when they open the file. They also can easily allow access for students, patrons, and collaborators from outside of the organization. This poster will show examples of how these apps can be utilized by library staff.

Pros & Cons

Pros

- Accessible anywhere with an internet connection
- Works on mobile devices
- Shareable - view only, editing permission
- Multiple editors, in real-time

Cons

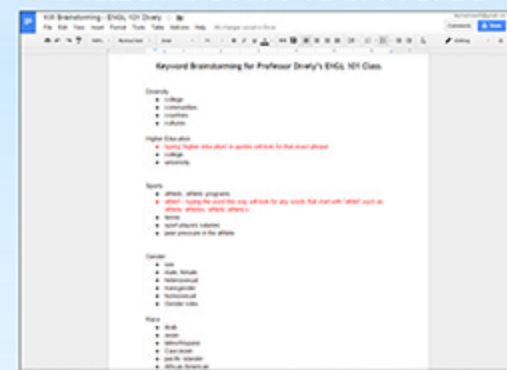
- Depends on Internet
- Not as robust as traditional Microsoft Office software
- Need buy-in from colleagues
- Privacy/security issues

Uses

Examples of uses

- Collaboration on a shared document
- Document with multiple creators
- Students - group projects
- Seeking feedback
- Provide access to document to staff such as student workers (w/no network access)
- Making real-time information available quickly - always looking at most recent version

Classroom Activities



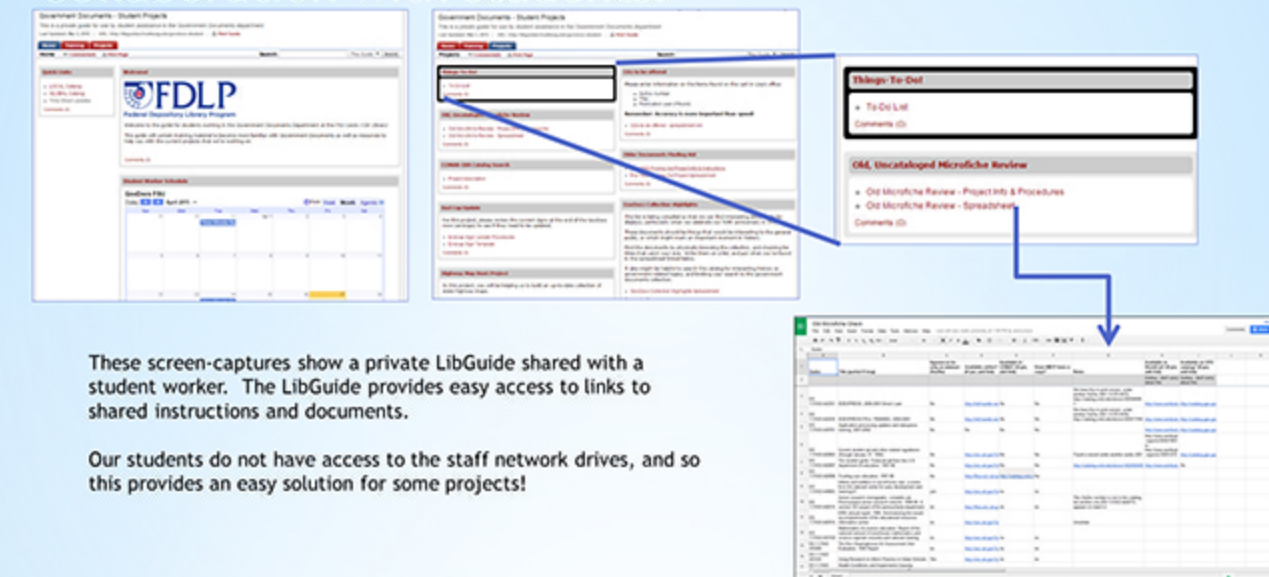
A link to this document was provided on a LibGuide for a class that was meeting in the library. The students were all researching a similar topic, and so this document was provided for them to enter their keyword ideas.

All students were able to enter the document simultaneously, and enjoyed seeing their responses appear before the class. The list of keyword ideas was available for the rest of the semester for their reference, and they were also able to continue adding ideas to it.

Recommendations

- Back-up important files to your network drives.
- Be cautious about working with personal information or other sensitive data
- Experiment with other cloud productivity apps

Collaboration with students:



These screen-captures show a private LibGuide shared with a student worker. The LibGuide provides easy access to links to shared instructions and documents.

Our students do not have access to the staff network drives, and so this provides an easy solution for some projects!

Sharing

Where to look for sharing options

- Office Online (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) - Under the File tab or the Share box at top right.
- GoogleDocs - Top, right share box
- Evernote - Top, right of note. Drop-down menu with notebook.

Features to consider:

- Sharing with specific people (might require everyone to have an account), or sharing with anyone by providing a link.
- Sharing so that others can edit or so that they can only view.



Coplan, Michael. Mobile Worker. Creative Commons License CC BY-SA 2.0
<https://flic.kr/p/10d11w> <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>

Research assistance



A cloud document could be shared with a patron to help them with their research. With a shared cloud document, the patron can be given clickable links, and you may add/edit the document so that it is always up-to-date.

This example is a note from Evernote. An extra advantage of Evernote is the ability to attach files such as articles.

Embed Documents, Slide Shows



When sharing a document, Office Online also provides an option for embedding. This provides an option for displaying slide shows and other documents in blog posts, web sites, LibGuides, etc.

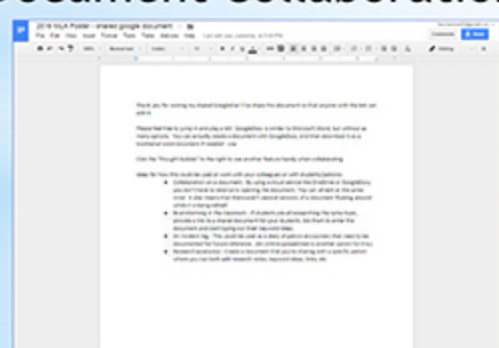
When these documents are edited, then the embedded versions will immediately reflect those updates.

Revisit & Explore



This LibGuide takes you to a copy of this poster as well as links to shared files that you can explore:
<http://libguides.frostburg.edu/cloudcollaboration>

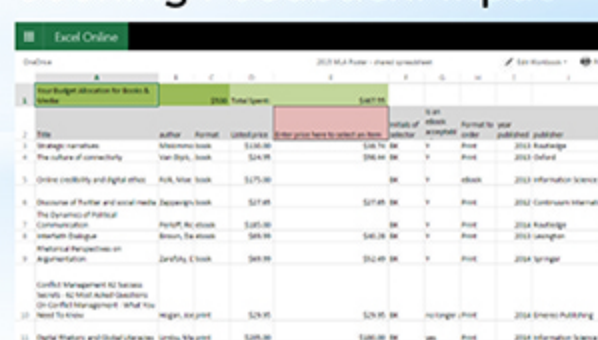
Document Collaboration



If several coworkers are contributing to a report, article, or any other document, it can be difficult taking turns opening it on a network drive, and emailing versions back and forth can become confusing.

A document such as a GoogleDoc or Word Online document can be kept in one place and editors can make changes at the same time!

Seeking Feedback/Input



An online spreadsheet can be helpful when requesting input about specific items or topics.

The spreadsheet above is an example of a list of recommended books for a department to purchase. The books were found on Choice Reviews Online. If a faculty member wanted to purchase it, added the price to the "selection" column, and it would keep an (approximate) total of how much of their budget allocation was being spent. Faculty were able to add items to this list as well.