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Designing a Referencing Tool to improve Workflow.

Background

Citing academic references is a critical part of researching if the writer wishes to avoid accusations of plagiarism and bibliographies, which are heavily time-consuming. Improper referencing will lead to researchers bearing the weight of academic plagiarism. IT solutions providers have spotted a gap in the market for tools that make referencing less of a chore. Citation managers such as Zotero, EndNote, and Cite This For Me provide easy storage of academic sources in an online platform, making them accessible from most devices connected to the web.

Problem

Unfortunately, these tools are often riddled with problems ranging from poor performance to a lack of citation styles. Some features are hidden behind paywalls. Oversights like these can make or break the user's experience with an application. This became more apparent after conducting preliminary research, which brought people's opinions on available referencing tools to light. Forum sites such as Reddit, Zotero Forums and The Student Room often have such discussions about users' favourite tools and the issues within them.

Testing

Testing was performed with a client experienced in using referencing tools. They performed a list of basic operations and provided feedback on the application and thinks to be improved in future. This client was instrumental in guiding the design of this project with their experience offering valuable insights in referencing, associated tools and the problems lurking within.

Aim & Objectives

Construct an easy-to-use referencing tool that effectively creates a reference list in Vancouver style.

- Analyse designs and features that make current referencing tools useful.
- Recognise drawbacks in current referencing tools.
- Research how referencing tools can improve workflow.
- Design and build an application that aligns with user requirements and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the application against other software.
- Gather user feedback on the application.
- Report research findings.

Conclusion

The aim of this project was to create an application that could improve workflow by making the automation features of referencing tools better and simpler. The issue with referencing tools like Zotero, EndNote and MyBibliography, despite boasting an impressive list of tools, they were too much for new users because of cluttered interfaces, menus, the styling was incorrect in many cases, or they might be expensive to purchase in the first place. It managed to achieve this by being capable of returning long lists of search results, then users could pick something from the list and store it in a safe place, then users could retrieve saved literature in Vancouver reference styling – this being the core idea of what a reference tool does, Reference Boss can happily achieve it with speed.









