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BrowZine: A Review

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INFORMATION Rx

Cynthia J. Vaughn, Column Editor

BrowZine: A Review

Skye Bickett

ABSTRACT. BrowZine, an app designed for tablets, allows users to browse, save, organize, and read journals and journal articles from open source or subscribed journals. This article will highlight some of the features of the product.

KEYWORDS. BrowZine, tablets, mobile applications, journal reader, content delivery, current awareness

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INTRODUCTION

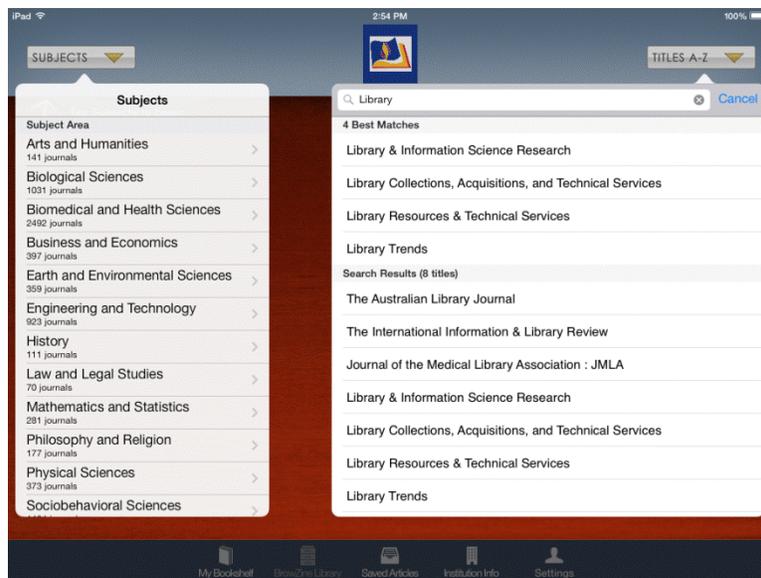
BrowZine was the first project created in 2011 by Third Iron, a company that develops library technologies (Figure 1).¹ The app is available for download on all iPads, Androids devices with an operating system version 4.0 or higher, and the Kindle Fire HD.² Users can download the app for free and have access to hundreds of free, open source journals including BMC Medicine, Breast Cancer Research, and Critical Care. Once downloaded, the user can browse libraries to determine whether or not their institution has a subscription to BrowZine. If so, the user can enter their institutional login information to gain access to journals to which the library has a subscription. With access to over 60 publishers, such as Elsevier, Wiley, and Taylor and Francis, there are thousands of journals the user will be able to browse, read, and save.³



Legend: FIGURE 1. BrowZine Loading Screen

SEARCHING FOR JOURNALS AND ARTICLES

Users can begin searching BrowZine by selecting the BrowZine Library icon at the bottom of the screen and looking through the subjects, entering all or part of a title, or scrolling through the list of titles (Figure 2). When browsing by subject users will be shown a list of main subjects and the number of titles within that subject area. Once a subject is chosen users will be given a list of categories to choose from with the number of titles in each. The results for the chosen category will be displayed on a simulated bookshelf. Within this area the journals are further divided into subcategories on each shelf. If a user wants to browse the subject area Sociobehavioral Sciences and the category of Library and Information Science they could then see a bookshelf with shelves titled Academic Libraries, Archives and Preservation, Collection Management, or Information Science, to name a few. The bookshelf scrolls vertically while individual shelves scroll horizontally.



Legend: FIGURE 2. Search by Subject or Title

If a user chooses to search by title they could scroll through the entire list of titles to which they have access or by entering the name of the title. If only a portion of a title is entered then all titles with that word or words will appear in the results. For example, entering “social science” will bring up *Social Science and Medicine* and the *Journal of Biosocial Science*, but not *Social Psychological and Personality Science* or *Social Neuroscience*.

Once the user chooses a journal it will open to the table of contents for the most current issue of the selected journal. If a different issue or volume is needed then users can view them by selecting the Available Issues button and scrolling until they find the desired issue. When an article is chosen and opened it will look and operate like a PDF. References and email addresses are in blue and clickable. Clicking a reference will take users to the reference page while clicking an email address will open the user’s mail client. Users can flip between the previous and next article by clicking one of the blue arrows at the top of the screen or by hitting the back arrow button at the top left of the screen and going back to the table of contents.

MY BOOKSHELF

Users also have the option to create their own bookshelf, but the customization is minimal. Each bookshelf and the individual shelves can be titled, but each bookshelf can only hold sixteen journals - four shelves that can accommodate four journals each. Journals can be deleted or moved at any time.

Each time the BrowZine app is opened users will receive push notifications that show the number of articles that have been added since the journal was last viewed (Figure 3). The number indicated in the notification will lower each time a new article is read; however, if users would like notifications to be cleared immediately they can open each journal and press the button titled Clear Unread Notifications or go to settings and select Clear All Notifications.

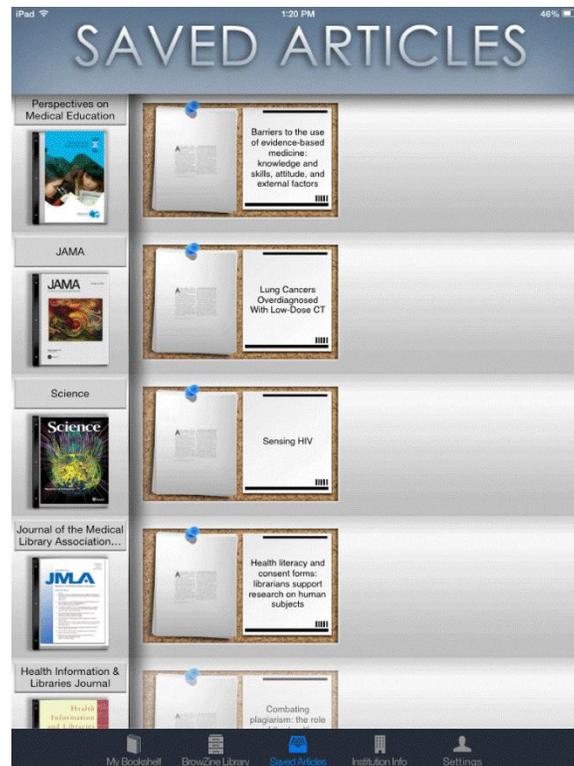


Legend: FIGURE 3. My Bookshelf and Notifications

SAVING AND SHARING ARTICLES

Saving articles in BrowZine is very user friendly. If a user likes the titles and wants to read it later they can simply click the file icon to the right of the title and it will automatically be

archived. If the article is currently open and being read the user can click the upload icon in the upper right hand corner and select the Save Article icon. To view saved articles users can click the Saved Articles icon at the bottom of the screen. Here they can read or delete their saved articles (Figure 4).



Legend: FIGURE 4. Saved Articles

In addition to saving articles to the BrowZine app users can open the article in a browser, as a PDF with several applications, including iAnnotate, Kindle, Office²HD, Dropbox, or Evernote, or save the reference information in Zotero, RefWorks, or Mendeley. Articles can be shared in a variety of ways. This includes emailing the article using the mail client on the device or pushing to social media outlets, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr (Figure 5).

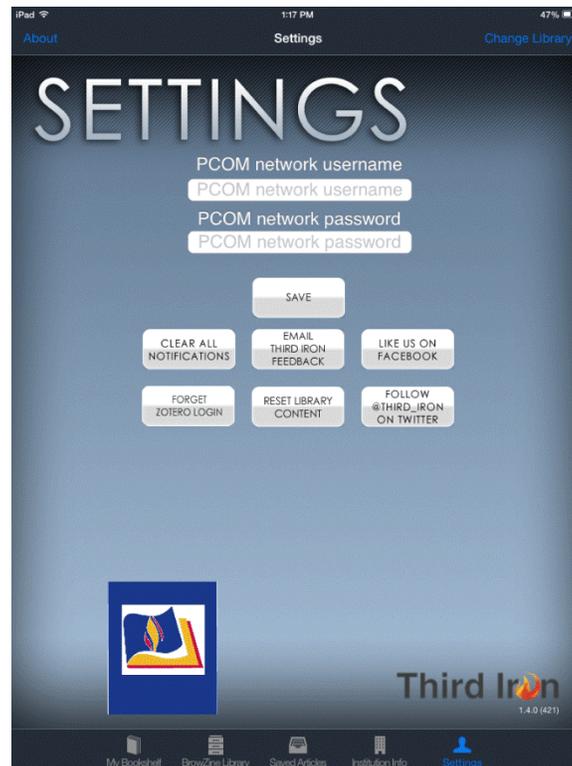


Legend: FIGURE 5. Saving and Sharing Articles

BRANDING AND INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

When purchasing BrowZine institutions can brand the application with their logo and add institutional information. On the BrowZine Library and Settings screens the logo of the library or institution can be added to the screen (Figure 6). Users will be remotely authenticated through a proxy service, such as EZproxy, when entering their institutional login information for seamless browsing. Additionally, the Institution Info screen can link to any webpage that the purchasing institution chooses, whether it is the home page of the institution, the library's website, or the

library catalog. When browsing the website of this feature, users have minimal functionality in that there is only a back button at the top left of the screen.



Legend: FIGURE 6. Settings and Institutional Login

USAGE STATISTICS

Librarians can get various statistics for the usage of this application. The application tracks the number of BrowZine sessions for patrons using their institutional login, how many times the table of contents for each journal is viewed, and the number of full text downloads by journal. Session statistics can be broken down by operating system and by how many hours users have been in the BrowZine app. Statistics will also show which journals users save to My Bookshelf.⁴

PRICING

BrowZine's pricing model is an annual subscription broken down by type of institution - academic institutions, stand-alone medical schools, hospitals, corporate & government organizations, and community colleges (Figure 7). According to their 2014 pricing chart cost is determined by the number of full time employees or bed count; however, there are some stipulations for mixed institutions. If the institution is a medical school or university associated with a hospital then the price is 100% of the medical school/academic institution price plus 50% of the hospital price. If there is a medical school within a university then pricing model used will be the academic institution price. Consortia pricing is also available.⁴

SUPPORT

Users can find answers to questions within the knowledge base of the support area.⁵ Here users will find general information, questions about getting started, authentication and proxy support information, and troubleshooting tips. While there are limitations in BrowZine their suggestion area within the support portion of the site is great.⁶ Users can give feedback and other users can comment on or vote the suggestion as good. BrowZine staff mark suggestions as under review, planned, started, completed, or declined with comments, if appropriate. This type of support helps users stay up-to-date on what is happening with the application and lets users know that they are being listened to. For instance, users indicated that a version of the app was needed for the iPhone and BrowZine has indicated that the project has been started for both the iPhone and

Android phones and will be completed in spring 2014.⁷ Another suggestion indicated that adding open access journals from PubMed Central would be beneficial and BrowZine replied that the practicality of this is being reviewed and the project is being planned.⁸ Their support team is responsive and open to ideas from BrowZine users.

CONCLUSION

BrowZine is still relatively new, but can be a wonderful tool for faculty, staff, and students in a variety of settings. It is user friendly and available on a several types of tablets and, soon, phones. Browsing, reading, saving, and sharing articles just got a lot easier.

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