

Mentoring the Writing Process through Technology: A Critical Review of Organizational and Productivity Apps

Although much discussion of music theory pedagogy focuses on the ever-present “undergraduate core,” music theorists also play an important role in guiding students of all levels through research and writing projects. To successfully complete a research project, a student must manage their time, organize their resources and ideas, and present their research in a coherent and convincing way. Strategies that facilitate these tasks are often not taught explicitly in the classroom, and students may find themselves struggling with these skills as they enter the writing process. New technological innovations in app development purport to make these tasks easier. Studies of apps like these in secondary and post-secondary education classrooms have corroborated anecdotal student findings that apps can support lower-level process skills, facilitate collaboration between both peers and mentors, and allow students to focus successfully on achievable goals and higher-order writing tasks (Ewoldt 2017; Reiterer et. al. 2012). But with hundreds of apps on the market, which apps are best suited for the writing process?

This poster provides a digest of apps designed to help researchers with four common writing issues: time management (e.g. Pomodoro, Forest), task management (e.g. Wunderlist, Trello), resource management (e.g. Mendeley, Zotero), and project visualization (e.g. Scrivener, Coggle). Among these categories, the authors critically evaluate five to seven apps using a rubric based on the app’s variety of features, intuitiveness of use, facility for collaboration, platform availability and price. Based on our findings, we will make recommendations regarding the “best-bet” apps in each category. By providing a comprehensive list of effective apps to both mentors and students, we will help to facilitate an open dialog regarding effective organizational and managerial habits, giving students valuable skills to succeed in their research and writing endeavors.