

Asana

Asana is marketed as a project management software that allows collaborators to work together on multiple projects. The app is available on iOS, Android, and web, and it is primarily designed for business teams (although can be used without business affiliation). Its ability for project visualization lies in a note-card style interface called Kanban boards, combined with a work-flow style task completion ability. One can create categories based on project sections, can move these categories around, and for each category, can create notecards representing sub-sections or tasks. On the back of each notecard, users can provide descriptions, specify tasks and sub-tasks, delegate tasks to different project members, attach documents, and comment on the notecard. This allows the user to take their project visualization (notecard-style) and turn it into a robust series of to-dos that help the user take their project from visualization to completion. Its collaborative features allow mentors and mentees to work together on a project in its initial stages, before words are on the page—a crucial time for mentorship in the writing process, but one that is also rife with potential confusion and misunderstanding on both parts. This kind of project visualization/management app can help with that.

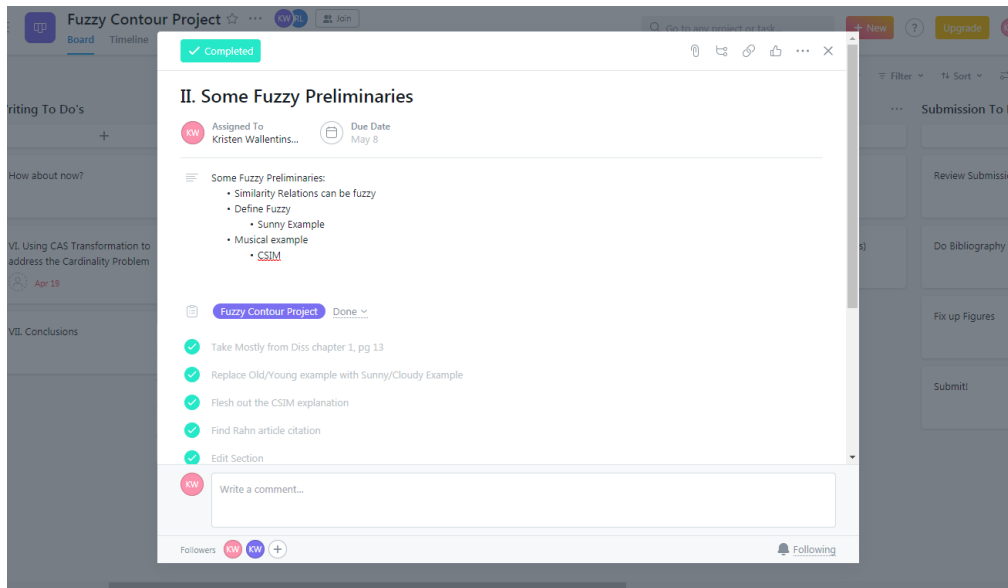
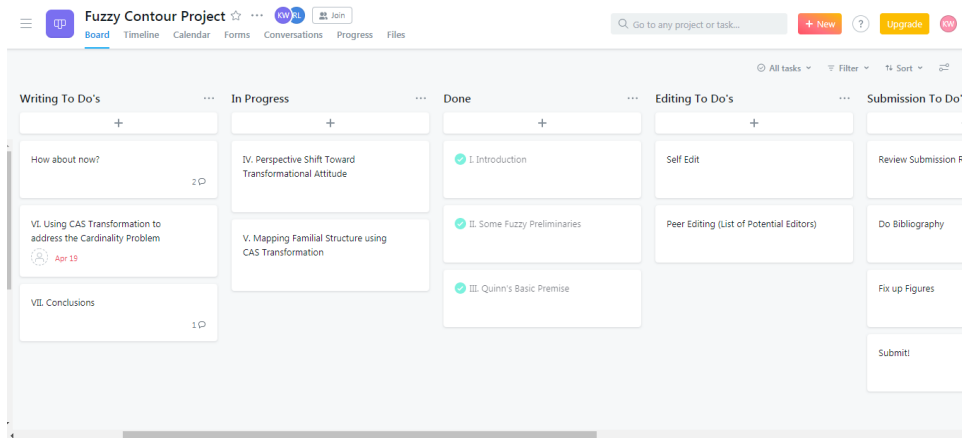
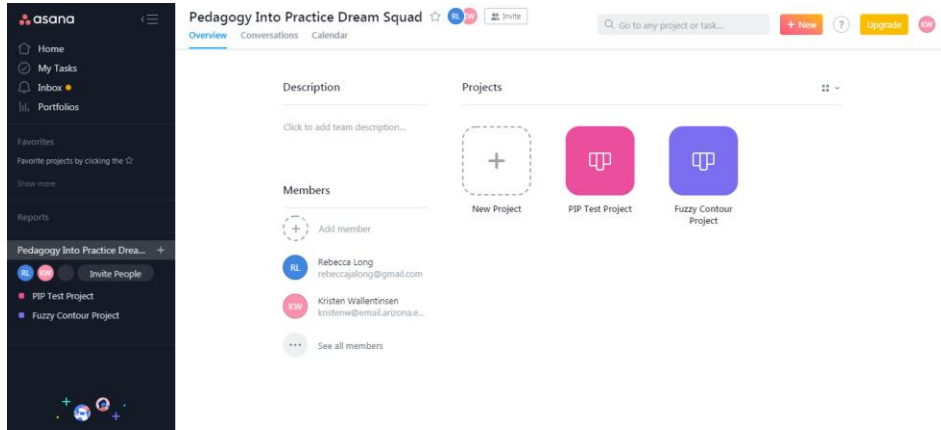
Points in favor:

- The ability for workflow creation: making to do lists, pulling tasks into “in progress” stages, and moving tasks to a done list allows users to be mindful of how much they are taking on at once, and how much they’ve done. This can drive motivation in useful ways.
- Robust functionality on the back of each notecard: allows for additional project organization and brainstorming.
- Multiple views: users can view their project as a task list, as a calendar, a file repository for attachments
- Facility for collaboration: group members can add tasks, comment on notecards, or attach documents. Asana notifies the owner of the project that a change has been made. Furthermore, a “progress” feature allows users to update collaborators on their progress with the project.

Points against:

- Asana is built on the notion that it is for companies. So a board must be associated with a particular group for the group to see it. Once the board is associated with a group, it can’t be moved to other groups, or to a user’s private space.
- It would be nice to be able to link projects together, since many projects are related, and may have inter-connecting parts. Other apps of this style can do that.
- Checklists do not allow one to see sub-tasks unless the user clicks on the task. So there is no way to know that sub-tasks exist for a task unless one clicks on it.
- Syncing delay between platforms.

Screenshots:



Coggle

Coggle is a mind-mapping app for Android, iOS, and web. The app aids in project visualization by allowing users to create diagrams and flowcharts to visually organize their writing projects. Within the mind-map style visualization, users can add nodes and links, label these nodes and links, and drag them around in order to help them organize their project. For managing the ideas and content associated with a robust project, this works well. It is a good tool to help one manage the content or ideas of a project, allowing the user to create hierarchical structures in order to see relationships between concepts, and break down these concepts into their smaller components. Coggle also boasts a clean visual interface, collaborative capabilities, version history, color-coding, and a presentation mode. For the free version, the user gets 3 private mind maps and unlimited public mind maps. The next pay level (\$5 per month) up grants the user access to unlimited private mind maps, but we have not found this to be necessary, as the public mind maps work well and are not easily found on Coggle's public gallery.

Points in favor:

- Color-coding adds additional sorting capabilities beyond the mind map itself
- Collaborative features allow teams to work together, and gives mentors/mentees a platform to share and discuss a project before the writing stage.

Points against:

- The clean visual interface means that no buttons are readily visible. One must right click in order to access any functionality. Beyond this, there are more advanced capabilities that are hidden deeper in the program that are not readily accessible.
- Icons do not have text, making it difficult to know what each button does
- When collaborating, it is difficult to see what has been changed, or where comments are placed.

Screenshots:



MindMeister (and MeisterTask)

MindMeister is a mind-mapping tool that seamlessly integrates with a sister app called MeisterTask. Both apps are designed for iOS, Android, and web. The premise is that the user can create a mind map of a project in MindMeister, allowing it to function as a useful brainstorming app for project visualization. The user can then turn each part of the mind map into tasks for a project on MeisterTask, and this allows the user to manage the project. The mind map and the management are linked so whatever changes the user makes on one side is reflected on the other. In MindMeister, users can create mind maps, add nodes and links, label these nodes and links, and drag them around in order to help them organize their project. Users can also attach images, files, and links to nodes in order to keep track of sources and figures. The app also allows for collaboration: one can share mind maps with others, who can comment, make changes, or add to the shared map. Users can also see a detailed version history, which allows them to track what changes have been made. Once MindMeister is synced with MeisterTask, MindMeister will allow users to turn each node into a task, delegate tasks to others, set deadlines, and prioritize. These tasks will show up with boxes to be checked for completion in the mind map, but will also show up on a Kanban style workflow board in the sister app MeisterTask, making the collaboration between platforms useful for those who like to use both strategies in combination. Both apps are free, but the free version of MindMeister only allows 3 mind maps. The subscription price for academics is \$2.50 per month (\$30 annual), and the non-academic price is \$4.99 per month.

Points in favor:

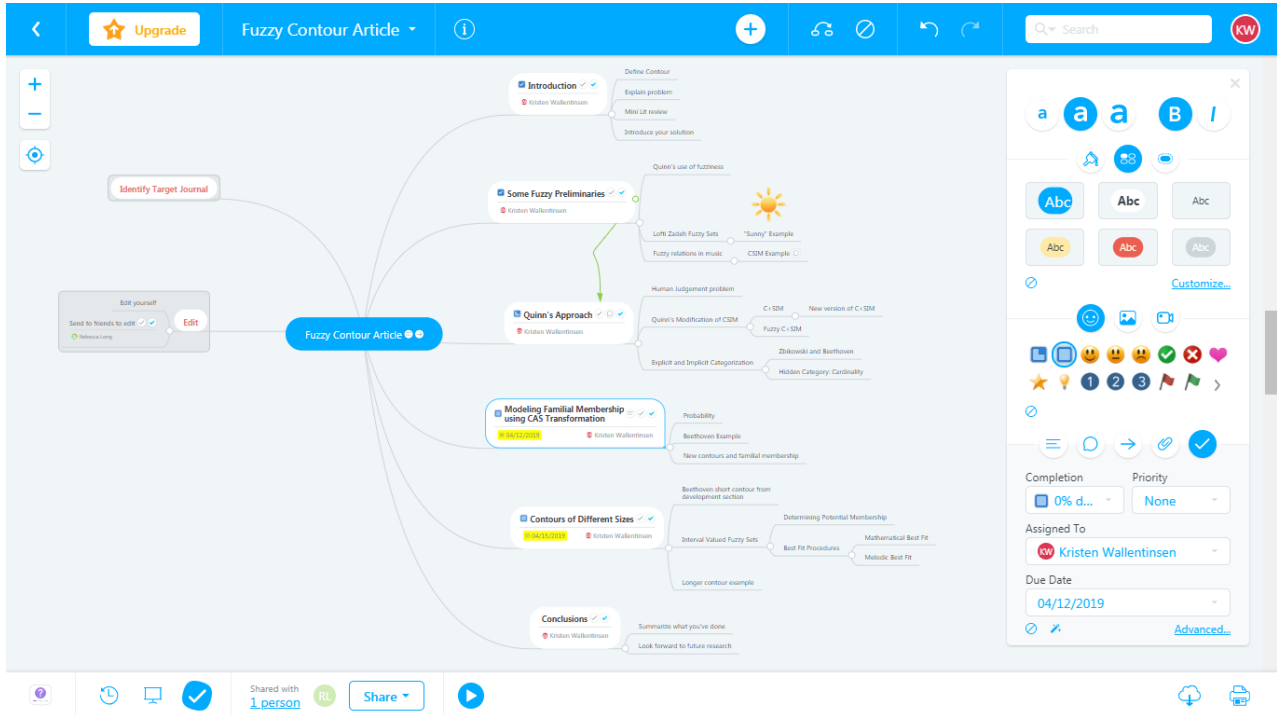
- The biggest draw for these apps is the ability to turn a project visualization into project management tasks, all in one platform.
- The visual user interface is very nice. The app easily organizes nodes, and adjusts them automatically if the user needs more room.
 - There is also a detailed tutorial that walks users through how to use the app
- The ability to attach links and files, and to add notes and comments on various parts of the map allows for further description and brainstorming beyond the mind map itself. This is very useful for those carrying out large research projects

Points against:

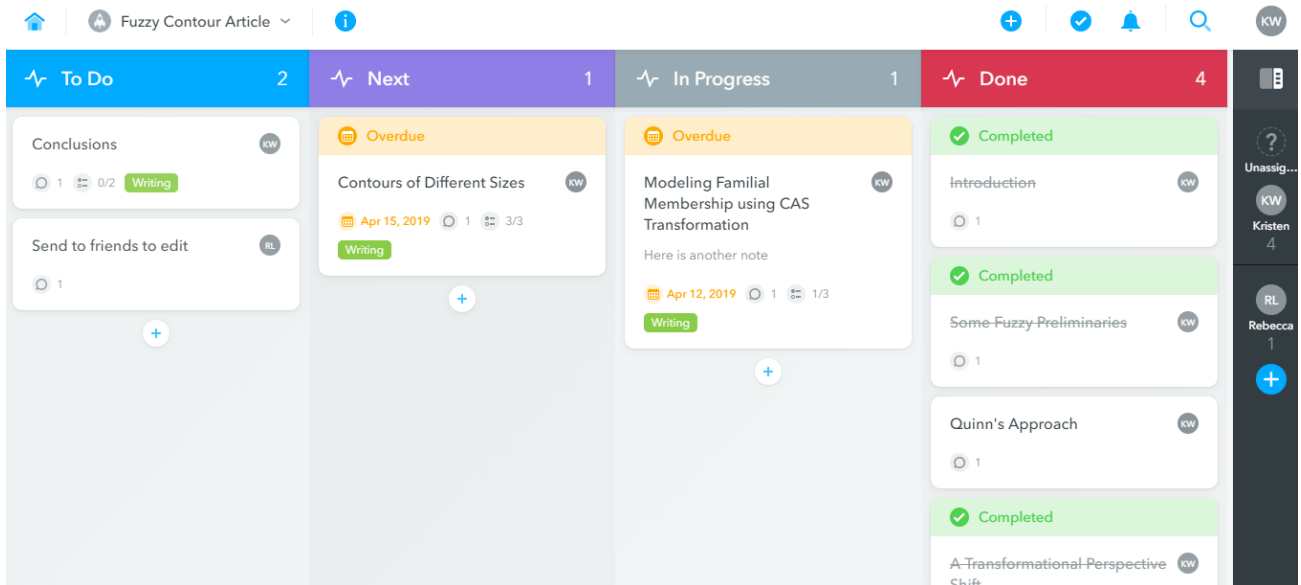
- Price. The free version is fairly limited, but we do think the academic price is fairly reasonable for all of the functionality one gets out of the program.
- Icon buttons are limiting the ease of use of the app, although not as badly as other apps.

Screenshots:

MindMeister



MeisterTask



SuperNoteCard

Super Note Card is a web app that attempts to digitize the experience of organizing and brainstorming projects using note cards. The app allows the user to create notecards, write on both sides, and then to organize those notecards into decks and sub-decks. Users can view their notecards either as decks, or as an outline view. The app also has the ability to create secondary categories (for example, by task), add deadlines and prioritization using flags, and attach links and files in order to organize figures and sources. Users can also customize their notecard experience based on the type of project, which can differentiate between non-fiction (which was tested here), fiction, and flashcards for quizzing. Each of these project types comes with its own set of unique capabilities. For example, the non-fiction had more ability for references and resource-linking, while the fiction version had greater storyboarding and character development capabilities. The app has a 30-day free trial, and then costs \$19 per year.

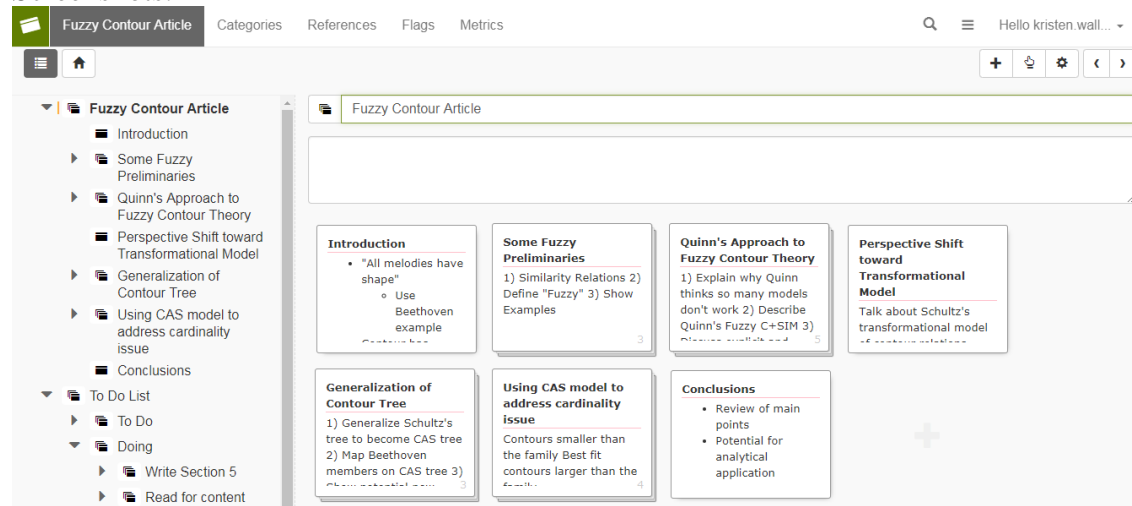
Points in favor:

- The robust interface that lets the user link to figures, sources, or other documents, so that users can have all their material organized in one place.
- The hierarchical levels of organization can go fairly deep with the sub-decks feature, allowing one to create detailed project visualizations all the way down to the smallest minutae.

Points against:

- The user interface is clunky. Not all the buttons are fully self-explanatory, and functionality is not very intuitive.
 - The ability to switch a notecard into a deck would be useful
 - It is not easy to move notecards between decks, should you choose to alter the structure of your project
- Collaborative features are not useful or intuitive. A user can send a project to others, but the other users only receive it as a personal copy of the project, and not as a collaborative project that they can edit and discuss.
- The \$19 annual subscription does not seem worth it when one considers that other free apps do better than SuperNoteCard in these areas.

Screenshots:



Trello

Trello is a project management software that allows the user to create multiple different project visualizations, complete with task management and workflow capability. The app is designed for iOS, Android, and web. Its ability for project visualization lies in a note-card style interface called Kanban boards, combined with a work-flow style task completion ability. One can create categories based on project sections, can move these categories around, and for each category, can create notecards representing sub-sections. On the back of each notecard, users can write descriptions, specify tasks and sub-tasks, delegate tasks to different project members, attach documents, and comment on the notecard. This allows the user to take their project visualization (notecard-style) and turn it into a robust series of to-dos that help the user take their project from visualization to completion. It has robust collaborative features that allow the user to share boards with other collaborators (or mentors), delegate tasks, and comment on notecards, providing a space for specific chat regarding each topic. This can help mentors and mentees have productive discussions regarding projects before the writing stage. The app is designed with the single user in mind, so it does not rely on the “use for business” model that many similar apps employ. The base version is free and provides a smooth user experience. Upgrading to premium (\$9.99 per month) gives users access to various power-ups that enhance the functionality of the boards and notecards.

Points in favor:

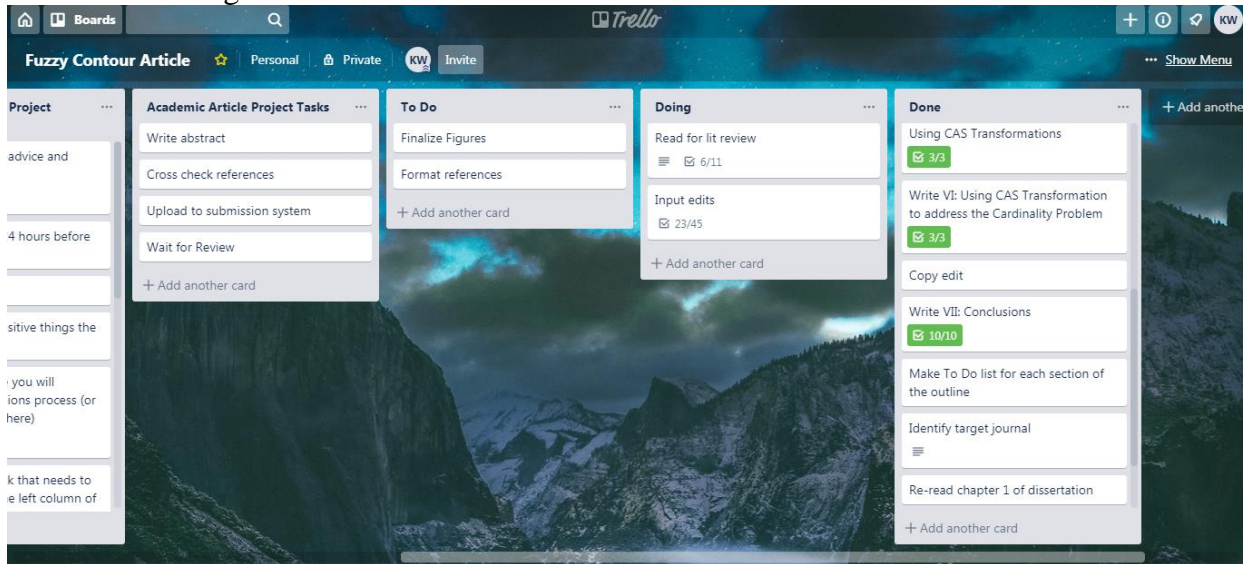
- The ability for workflow creation: making to do lists, pulling tasks into “in progress” stages, and moving tasks to a done list allows users to be mindful of how much they are taking on at once, and how much they’ve done. This can drive motivation in useful ways.
- Robust functionality on the back of each notecard allows for additional project organization and brainstorming.
 - Ability to create multiple different checklists on the back of one card
- Trello is designed for personal use, and avoids the cumbersome nature of the business-based model of other apps
- The ability to link boards together in order to manage larger projects like dissertations or books (so the user can have a board for the book, and sub-boards for each chapter)
- Has a color-blind accessibility mode

Points against:

- An automatic calendar feature could be added to manage deadlines better (one can add a calendar as a “power up,” but it is optional).
- Checklists could have sub-tasks with their own deadlines and delegation
- Has a limit on the file size of attachments. Users can get around this by linking to dropbox or google drive instead.

Screenshots:

A board for a single-authored article



The back of a Trello card

