

TechWrite STL—March 2021
 Survey of Members' Favorite Tools
 Ginger Peschke

Summary of recommendations and ideas from survey (16 respondents) and subsequent discussion

Hardware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most respondents either had or wished they had <u>two monitors</u>. • Some members mentioned using their phones as an ad hoc scanner (either with an app or simply by taking a picture). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two mentioned Genius Scan app on iPhone (free). • Two members liked their <u>Brother all-in-one laser printers</u> (one color, one B/W). • “My <u>Nulaxy vertical mouse</u> was much cheaper than others (approx \$12) but works just as well as pricier models I've tried.” • “The <u>Microsoft Sculpt keyboard and wireless mouse</u> are great.” • “<u>Yumqua has a mini handheld track ball mouse (Y-01)</u> it's not perfect but using it some of the time can help relieve pressure on the wrist.”
Writing software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All respondents mentioned Word, but more than half also use Google Docs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features of Google Docs used by members include document sharing and ability to access documents from anywhere.
Word processing add-ins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<u>EndNote, Grammarly, and PerfectIt</u> are most useful for me and what I recommend to others” • “<u>EndNote</u> is a terrific tool for large reference lists.” • “I use and recommend <u>PerfectIt</u>. I use macros and <u>Word's AutoCorrect function</u> for repeated insertions of text.” • At least two members highly recommended <u>Mendeley</u> (free reference management software). <u>Zotero</u> was also mentioned in this category but it wasn't clear how much experience members had with it.
Technical software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<u>Canva</u> [graphic design software] is web-based but highly useful; prefer <u>Lightroom</u> to PhotoShop and <u>Numbers</u> to Excel” • “I need to learn <u>LaTeX</u>. I have several clients who would prefer if I could work with it.” • One member mentioned <u>Dragon voice recognition software</u>.
Style guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMA Manual of Style was most commonly used. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>AMWA members receive a 20% discount when purchasing the AMA Manual of Style.</u>
Websites—grammar and writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar Girl [https://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl/] • english.stackexchange.com • acronymfinder.com • OneLook Dictionary Search [www.onelook.com] • Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) [https://owl.purdue.edu/]
Websites—reference and technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wikipedia.com (just for broad, superficial, or quick checks) • https://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html (time conversion) • http://www.worldfloraonline.org/ (to check plant species names)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.uniprot.org/taxonomy/ (to check species names) • https://cassi.cas.org/ (journal name abbreviations) • Google Scholar • PubMed • ResearchGate • NLM catalog (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/nlmcatalog/) • ClinicalTrials.gov • “I have a whole collection on my business website: https://www.joannemcandrews.com/links”
Accounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QuickBooks was mentioned several times, but not necessarily “loved”. • One member uses Quicken.
Social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LinkedIn (free version) was the most commonly mentioned social media tool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Ginger’s note] Wayne Breitbarth has a LinkedIn “tips” mailing list and posts a lot of free information on LinkedIn use (https://www.powerformula.net/free-resources-learning-linkedin/).
Outside support recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<u>Tracy Dorsey of Design Lab 443</u> (https://www.designlab443.com/) built my business website on Wix, and I maintain it. She is located in the St. Louis area and is wonderful to work with!” [Joanne McAndrews] • “I can also recommend a <u>website designer/builder</u> (<u>Victoria Brzustowicz</u>, www.VictoriaBCreative.com) and a <u>St. Louis accountant</u> (<u>Janice Roberg</u>, https://robergtaxsolutions.com/) whose clients are almost entirely freelancers.” [Ruth Thaler-Carter] • “For website development, I highly recommend <u>Today Data</u> [TodayData.com], operated for decades by self-employed Cheryl Hammond.” [Jan Niehaus] • Ann Paterson can recommend website builders and an accountant or lawyer to anyone interested. • “<u>Vistaprint</u> (highly recommend for printing). I've had my website there for some time and it is ok for someone who wants to build their own (and doesn't know how to code one), but if I do another I'll find someone to build it for me.” [Ginger Peschke]
Any one resource you would recommend to a new person?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>EndNote</u> (2 votes; 1 called it “fabulous”) • <u>AMA Manual of Style</u> (2 votes; 1 specified online version) • “Being a freelance forced me to learn <u>Google Docs</u>, and it's my go-to now. I love being able to work in the cloud, from any computer, and it's very easy to share documents. I also think having a <u>second monitor</u> was life-changing!” • “Probably <u>PerfectIt</u>, because it finds many of the little inconsistencies and allows me to spend time on the more difficult items. A close second is <u>OfficeTime</u>” • <u>OneLook Dictionary Search</u> • <u>PubMed</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I really like <u>Windows Video Editor</u>. It’s easy to use and you can learn how to use it by watching a 30-minute YouTube tutorial.” • “<u>InDesign</u> is growing on me, although I don’t find it to be intuitive.” • “<u>Canva</u>. I’m not a designer by trade, but this has enabled me to create much more professional layouts without outsourcing.” • “I work on journals, so it would be our manuscript-submission system.” • “I can't think of one in particular. I use many that I value.”
Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[A]ccess to PubMed and full journal articles has been crucial for me.” • “Join a professional society, such as the American Medical Writers Association!” • “You didn't mention Zoom! :) Also, Slack works well for organizing group projects.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slack allows threaded conversations. • “PubMed (especially the "Cite option), MedlinePlus, DailyMed, NLM Drug Information Portal, AMWA resources, Chicago Manual of Style” • Different things can be seen in hard vs online “I would add (to Resources) colleagues and professional associations (EFA, NAIWE, STC, AMWA, etc.)” • “I often do a hard copy for final proof as that’s where you see spacing and punctuation errors that aren’t obvious on the screen.” • “I found Google Forms easy to use for survey development and administration, less so for summarizing results.” • Plagiarism software was brought up during discussion. Tools mentioned were iThenticate (which might be prohibitively expensive for individual users) and Grammarly (though no one mentioned direct experience with this feature of the software). <p>A theme that came up several times during the meeting discussion is the idea of revisiting tools (especially software) periodically since new features and improvements might have been incorporated since the last look.</p>