

In the Classroom 121

My Killer Research Sequence

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Stan Skrabut: Well, thanks ever so much for taking time to listen to this podcast. I know you could be doing other things, perhaps you are, but you're still hanging out with me, and I really do appreciate it. In Rhode Island, where I'm hanging out right now, we are transitioning through spring. Days have been pretty nice. It's great to see the change in the leaves, and all the flowers, and well, also the pollen, which I'm not necessarily a fan of.

Still, nice time to be able to hang out and go for walks, listen to podcasts, which hopefully you're doing a walk maybe, and listening to this podcast. I'm pretty excited about this particular episode. This is a continuation of my discussion about Readwise, which I shared in Episode 116, so only about five episodes ago. When I first talked about Readwise, I was just using it to move my Kindle notes into Evernote, and then further into Zotero, and that's what I started with, but oh, man, have I picked up some new stuff since then.

It has significantly improved my research, the way that I was doing research, it's taken it to a whole new level. I want to share, I'm excited about this. Not only do I collect notes on Kindle, but I'm also now using Readwise to help collect and move my notes and highlights to Evernote that I am doing on the web and in PDF articles, all kinds of things, even collecting tweets from Twitter, I'm sending them over to Evernote through Readwise, lots of power with this tool.

The notes that I'm collecting on the web, and through these PDF articles, I'm using a tool called Hypothesis, and I talked about that in Episode 54, but basically, I am loving the results. For my research system, and it's a pretty straightforward system, uses five tools. These tools are Feedly, Hypothesis, Readwise, Evernote, and Zotero. I'm going to talk a little bit more about each of these and how they fit in my particular system.

As you may have come to realize, I'm a huge fan of systems. Systems allow me to do more, they allow me to do things more effectively and efficiently. I've talked about systems in the past, and I'll put a link into the show notes. I've talked about delegating, eliminating, automating, that's all part of my systems. This fits in the realm of this automation and the first tool that I want to talk about is called Feedly.

This is where my research journey typically begins. Just my day-to-day research, when I'm just collecting things, may not necessarily be when I'm doing my in-depth on a topic, like for a podcast research. This is my daily collecting research that I may use for books and articles that I'm writing, or who knows what project that I may be working on. Feedly is an RSS aggregator.

What this does is it will-- when I go to Feedly, I'll see the latest and greatest articles, blog posts, podcasts, all those different things, that come from all these different sites. Rather than go out to all these different sites, Feedly brings those articles to me and this saves an amazing amount of time. That's the first tool, is Feedly, that you subscribe to your different blog posts, and those articles, every time a new article comes out, it will come to you.

With Feedly, I'm able to organize these into major categories. Some of the categories I have are education, Instructional Technology, book publishing, I just added one on library management or library operations, because I'm new to that world, so I want to come up to speed as quickly as I possibly can. When something new occurs in one of those blogs, and one of those categories, then I will have new posts to read.

The nice thing about Feedly is you can subscribe to more things in blogs. In the show notes, I shared an article by Jessica Green explaining how you can create RSS feeds for all kinds of things, like rather than filling up your email box, you can collect your email newsletters through an RSS feed and then read them in Feedly, or things that you want to capture through your social media accounts or maybe that you're looking for a job and you want to see job postings.

She does a wonderful job of explaining how to create those feeds and get them into Feedly where you can just have one place you have to go in order to see what's going on. When I was working on my dissertation, I subscribed to journal databases, or basically, I would set up search queries in the academic library databases, and then subscribe to the RSS feeds. So, anytime a new article came out, fitting my search query, it would show up in Feedly.

I didn't have to go to the library and look for new articles all the time, I set up a series of queries that had certain parameters, things that I was interested or were relevant to my dissertation and I would have the articles come to me. A lot more effective than spending time rerunning all the different queries that you had to run. When I come across a new blog that I like that I think is going to provide me value, I add it to my Feedly.

I also go back into Feedly if there's things that are no longer in service, no longer running, I will also prune those blogs that are not serving my purpose. I tried to keep Feedly up to date, and it keeps sending me just good stuff. When I open Feedly, every day, I will see a new set of posts that have come in, new articles that need to be reviewed. I'll look through the titles, I'll look through the little snippet that's there, and if it looks like it's something that really interests me, I will go ahead and open that up for further review.

I'll open it up in my web browser, or if it's a PDF document, it will download for me and I'll take a look at it. If it's something that I want to keep, I will typically send it to Diigo, but Diigo is not part of this conversation today. I will send it to Diigo, and that I talked about in ITC 55, so go check out more about that part of the process. If I find an article worth mining for research, then I will move on to the next tool, which is

called Hypothesis. Hypothesis allows me to do note-taking and highlighting directly on those articles on the web.

Hypothesis is a social annotation tool. It allows you to mark up blog posts and PDF articles that are available that you can get on the web. Your annotations, anything you highlight or notes that you take, you can make those notes public, private, or maybe even restrict them to a group which you can use in your classroom. I'll share in the show notes links to that podcast episode where I go really into depth on how to use Hypothesis.

Just for a quick summary, what you're going to do is you're going to create an account for Hypothesis and then you're going to install the extension on your web browser. When you open up a page or PDF that you want to annotate, you're going to click on the Hypothesis tool on the toolbar, you will then select, highlight different parts of the document. Every time that you make a highlight, it will pop up a little tool that allows you to capture that annotation.

You can take notes, or you can just annotate it and/or capture the highlight. When you go back to that article, and you click on Hypothesis, you'll see everything that you already highlighted, which is pretty cool. This is what I do. I'll then open up another article, I'll turn on Hypothesis, I'll highlight what I want to highlight, and I'll keep repeating this process through all the articles that I open from Feedly.

If I am pretty certain that I'm going to be using an article in a potential book or a journal article, I will also save that article and add that reference to Zotero, which is my citation management tool. When I'm viewing an article, normally I will just highlight key points. When you're doing this, you may also want to create a note when pages are changing. If you're looking at a PDF article, and it's got page numbers, you may want to reference those notes as you're taking notes. This could help speed up when you're in the writing process and you can recognize where you've got breaks on different pages for different notes that you captured.

Now I've got all these notes in Hypothesis, the next step is actually automated. Readwise will then go in and curate all those highlights and notes that I made with Hypothesis and it will pull them into Readwise Because I have integrated Readwise with Evernote, Readwise will automatically export all these notes into Evernote, and when it does it, it will create a separate note for each of those articles or books that I'm reading, and it will just create a separate note.

If I happen to go back to a previous book, or article, a website, and I turn on say Hypothesis and I add new notes, it will add those to the end of those articles that are in Evernote. So, anything that you add after will always append to the bottom. It'd be nice if I just inserted it where it's supposed to be, but I think that's a little more challenging. The nice thing about when Readwise creates these articles in Evernote, it will include the title of the article, and also a link back to the original article as well as the date when that note was last edited.

Because of Readwise, I am capturing notes from my Kindle books, I am now capturing notes with highlights that I made using Hypothesis on blog posts and

journal articles, but I've also integrated Twitter into Readwise. Anytime that I favor a tweet, Readwise will collect that and upend it basically, at the end of the note that I have in Evernote. All that gets collected, sent over to Evernote.

Now, we move on to Evernote. Evernote's where I collect those raw notes. All that information gets collected to Evernote, I can enhance it if I want, but basically, it just takes what Readwise has sent it and creates a note. Now, those notes are also placed in a Readwise notebook. Readwise will create a notebook called Readwise and any notes that it makes will be put into that particular folder, so I know where everything is at.

Currently, since I started using Readwise, which was five episodes ago, I have 201 new notes in that folder. I have my initial 116 books, now, 117, and I also have-- the rest of it is articles that I've reviewed, and captured things, so pretty happy with that. Evernote is a tremendously powerful tool. I could create all kinds of podcast episodes, just talking about Evernote.

Instead, I'm going to publish a book. I'm in the final edits of a book called *It's basically Evernote* for college students and just showing college students how they can leverage Evernote. This particular strategy I'm talking about right now will also be part of that book. I will keep you informed about the book in case you're interested in it, but for now, Evernote is just a convenient place to curate all those notes.

I'm glad that I have a tool like Readwise that just does it automatically for me. From there, I take those notes and move them over to Zotero. When I start doing serious writing, if I'm writing a book, if I'm writing a journal article, then I am working from Zotero. I will take articles, pull them into Zotero, so I have the citations, and the nice thing about the citations is when I export them, I can export them in APA, MLA, Chicago, all kinds of different citation styles.

The nice thing is Zotero helps me manage those particular citations. With Zotero, I can also take my library of all those articles and books and everything else that I've collected, all those different references, and arrange them in sub-collections. A sub-collection, for example, my dissertation was a sub-collection of different journal articles that I have written or contributed to, each one of those I've put into a sub-collection.

What it does is it allows you to take only a subset of the articles in your main library and brings them in there so it's more manageable. Zotero becomes more and more powerful as I keep adding content to it because I'm able to do free query searches or use tags, I can see relationships between articles and books and the notes that I've taken. This allows me to pull them together in different ways and help contribute to the conversation.

In terms of my research system, I will take an article or book and add it to Zotero. Then, I'm going to take the notes and probably, in most cases, it's going to be now, the notes that I get from Evernote, and I will bring them into Zotero. Very often, I will break them up into sub-notes, maybe an article is talking about different pieces or different concepts and I will break those notes down into those individual concepts.

That allows me to tag each of those notes uniquely, and those tags are what help build those relationships. I'm very big on tagging. I use that in order to build my notes. One of the things that I learned when I first started using Zotero is, for example, a book chapter. Book chapter may cover a lot of different topics, and I would just create a note for a book chapter, but then I realized as I was tagging it, I'm adding all kinds of tags, but it may only reference a small aspect of that chapter.

As I've come to learn how to use Zotero, I've learned to atomize my notes a little more. That allows me to just really focus on that specific thing instead of bringing in a lot of information that I don't need as I'm in the writing process. Once I'm done adding things to Zotero, I basically can add them to a sub-collection and go about my writing process. That is really my system. That's my system in a nutshell.

I first go to Feedly in order to see what articles or blog posts that have come back that I'm interested in. If I think it's worthy of further exploration, I'll open it, and then I may highlight it with Hypothesis, and/or I'll send it over to Diigo. Then, Readwise will take all my notes and highlights that I've captured and create a note in Evernote for each of those different articles that I reviewed.

Once the note's in Evernote, then, when I'm ready, I'll go to Zotero, and add that article as a reference, and then add my notes to that particular article, and dissect it and tag it and do all the things that I need to do. Then I'm ready to start using it in writing projects. That is my system. I hope you found it useful. If you've got questions, throw them in the comments, probably follow this up with a video, but until then, I want you to enjoy your day. Here's a quick plug for my book.