PRODUCT REVIEW / ANALYSE DE PRODUITS

BrowZine

Product: BrowZine

Purpose: A mobile application (app) that provides a digital bookshelf for the latest issues of your favourite scholarly journals.

URL: thirdiron.com/BrowZine

Intended audience: Library patrons in any academic discipline with an interest in using technology to remain up to date in their field.

Special features: This app can be used with IOS and Android operating systems. It allows you to read articles, store them on your personal bookshelf, or move them into another reader app on your device. Users can also move articles into other programs such as Zotero, Mendeley, or Dropbox.

In short: BrowZine can transform the way users interact with their favourite periodicals.

Product description

BrowZine takes the effort out of staying up to date in your field. Created by Third Iron, this mobile app relays a library's electronic journal holdings onto a platform where users can place their favourite journals on a personal bookshelf and be alerted when the latest issue has been released.

Although some open access titles are included with the free download in the app store, patrons will prefer to use BrowZine under their institution's license. After downloading the app, the "Institution Info" button directs users to select their library from a list. After their institutional login is entered and accepted, the "BrowZine Library" button opens up a multitude of options by searching for journals by subject or title (Figure 1). From there users can select titles and opt to "Add to My Bookshelf", see "Available Issues" or "Show Journal in Library", which displays the journal along with other titles in that subject area.

After adding a journal to the bookshelf, patrons can easily see when a new issue is available. Notifications pop up on the journal cover, but settings can be configured to "Mark All Journal Articles Read", which eliminates all alerts. After clicking a journal cover and being taken to the latest issue's table of contents, users can then click a file icon beside each article and add it to their "Saved Articles".

A noteworthy feature of BrowZine is the ability for citations to be directly exported to bibliographic managers (Zotero, RefWorks, and Mendeley), shared on social media, emailed, or uploaded to the device's PDF reader as full text. This is a seamless process that can be done by selecting articles within the "Saved Articles" button, clicking the share icon, and then choosing the preferred option for sharing. When a citation is emailed, the recipient is provided with two separate links: one for institutional affiliates who can log in and one for outside users. Those external to the organization are told that full text may not be available to them, and when open access articles are shared via email only one link is provided.

Users with cross-appointments are not restricted to only one institution in BrowZine and can log in to different libraries under the "Settings" button. Although the personal bookshelf never changes, the content that is accessible may vary depending upon institutional subscriptions. If a user places a journal on their bookshelf under one account and later logs in under another, the existing journals on the bookshelf will become translucent grey images that are not accessible under the alternate account [1].

Within the BrowZine Library the journal arrangement is clear and colourful. Cover details are easily visible and the full text of an article is clear. After a user is logged in under their institution, they can click the "Institution Info" button and be taken to the full version of their library homepage. This is done within the app in a smooth and timely manner.

There are other e-journal apps on the market such as Read by QxMD, Docphin, and Docwise. Designed for academic journals in diverse areas of medicine, these apps have their merits and would be especially valuable in a hospital setting. BrowZine's interface, however, is less overwhelming for users who are new to mobile technology, and the focus of the app is easy browsing rather than quick retrieval. Owing to their high quality but notable differences, libraries that are considering this type of content delivery should thoroughly investigate each product.
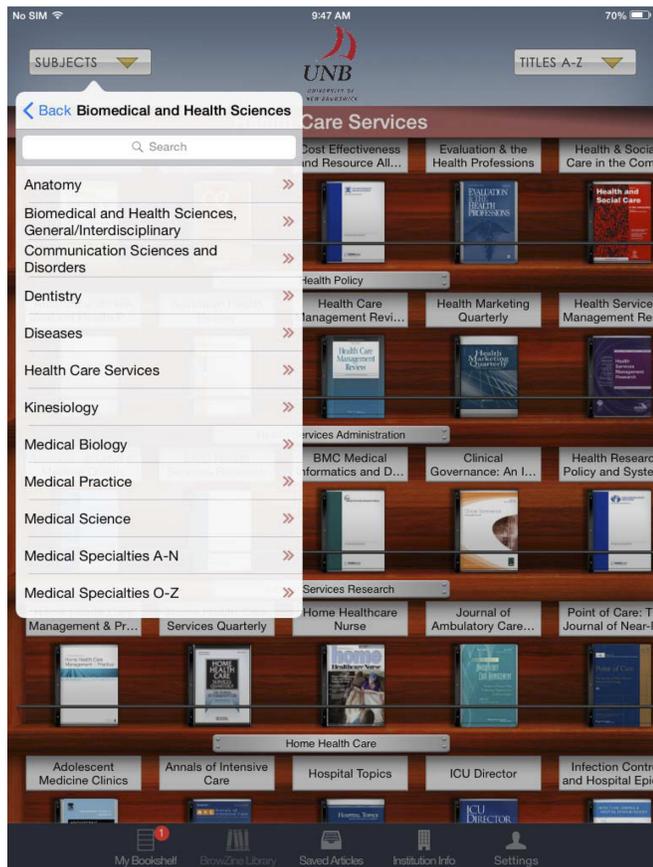
Cost

BrowZine is free to download from the device's app store and includes some open access journals. If the library has subscribed to BrowZine, users can browse their institution's holdings by logging in with their university–hospital credentials. Price structures are subject to change; therefore, libraries must contact Third Iron for an exact subscription quote based on an approximate number of full-time equivalent users for institutions or number of beds for hospitals [2].

Compatibility

BrowZine is available as a free download for iPad, iPhone, and Android devices (including the Kindle Fire HD). Creating a free BrowZine sharing account allows

Fig. 1. Search under BrowZine's "Subjects" to find journals in a specific area.

Fig. 2. BrowZine boasts an attractive and functional interface.

users to sync bookshelves across devices. Setup is easy; simply follow the provided instructions (found when opening the app or under the "Settings" button) then log in on the secondary device, thereby completing the process [3]. As of this review's submission, bookshelves on Android devices cannot be shared with each other. However, Third Iron is working to remedy this as well as launch cross-platform syncing between iOS and Android [4].

BrowZine taps into the library's electronic holdings and supports serials from reputable publishers such as the American College of Physicians, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, Springer, Wiley, and many more [5]. Libraries operating with SFX, Alma, Serials Solutions, ProQuest Intota, Journal Finder, EBSCO A-Z, and OCLC holdings can find support in this product, and BrowZine supports numerous proxy servers except ATHENS, though they are working on a solution [6].

Strengths

Accountability to their customers is important, and BrowZine is committed to reporting by "provid[ing] usage statistics and other analytics back to libraries", as well as "collect[ing] anonymous data about how users interact with BrowZine" [7].

BrowZine's web page has a thorough FAQ section, contact information for support, and instructions are written in plain language.

Third Iron paid attention to aesthetics when designing BrowZine. Although simple in design, the personal bookshelf is attractive with its metallic shine, glossy hardwood floor beneath it, and a little plant on top (Figure 2). Users can fill up to four bookshelves, and scrolling horizontally through the pages provides a differently coloured wall behind each shelf. The layout simplifies the process of perusing the latest releases, and it removes the obstacles that users can encounter with a discovery layer or bibliographic database.

Weaknesses

BrowZine is not a search tool and is unsuitable for structured literature searching. In the academic setting, libraries serving a largely undergraduate population may see no need in acquiring a product like BrowZine, though faculty would find the product useful.

Although BrowZine is relatively instinctual, syncing devices can be tricky. When a user sets up a BrowZine sharing account on their primary device, the contents of "My Bookshelf" from that device are saved in the cloud. Any subsequent device registered under that sharing account will then pull its contents from the initial

bookshelf in the cloud, thereby overwriting any contents that were saved on the secondary device prior to syncing. Users are informed of this during syncing and must agree to accept the overwrite, but for inexperienced users this could lead to a mishap.

Conclusion

The end-user will appreciate this app for its attractive interface and ease of use. As libraries gradually shift their content to an electronic delivery model, BrowZine gives scholars the opportunity to stay up to date with their favourite journals and libraries the means to monitor their usage statistics. Though simple to use and incredibly valuable, BrowZine may not appeal to all user tastes and it is at the library's discretion to decide what their patrons would prefer in an electronic journal app. However, BrowZine is a definite "must" to consider, as tremendous effort has gone into making this product an outstanding contender.

Please note: All personal communication has been cited with permission.

References

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