Description

Overleaf is an online platform powered by LaTeX. It is free and is designed with collaborative publishing and writing in mind. The service boasts of 600,000 users from 180 countries who have used Overleaf to create eight million projects to date. Inera, a company focused on publishing technology and responsible for the development of eXtyles and Edifix, has partnered with Overleaf. This means that you can now use Edifix to easily structure, format, and edit your bibliography while you write. You can choose to export your bibliography in the BibTeX format and upload the BibTeX file to the associated Overleaf document.

Overleaf and Purdue University

Purdue University established a year-long trial relationship with Overleaf in an attempt to improve graduate student writing. Originally, the Purdue Graduate School would make thesis templates available to its graduate students in both LaTeX and Word formats. Many students were more familiar with the Microsoft program but some of the formatting required by Purdue University was not easily accomplished in Word. LaTeX makes the formatting of documents easier but LaTeX is a programming language with a steep learning curve which made it intimidating for students. The difficulty in formatting theses in accordance with the university's requirements meant that the graduate school staff had to have at least five meetings with each student to help them correctly format their thesis before it could be submitted.

Purdue University initiated a one-year pilot project with Overleaf. They chose to work with Overleaf because it is cloud-based, requires no installation, and is a LaTeX and Rich Text platform. Its interface is easy to use and gives authors the option to write in LaTeX or Rich Text mode which gave users access to the power of LaTeX while making the experience less intimidating.

At the end of the trial, it was found that 35% of the STEM graduate students used the Purdue Overleaf thesis template. Also, students who used this platform to write their theses spent less time with the graduate school staff. On average, instead of needing at least five meetings before their thesis was ready for submission, students using the Purdue Overleaf template needed only two or three meetings. Given that about 490 theses were prepared using this template; it meant that 980 fewer meetings took place between students and the graduate school staff. This template, therefore, lets the staff spend less time in meetings, thereby, making this time available for their other responsibilities. In light of these very positive results, Purdue University has decided to establish a five-year partnership with Overleaf.

Category

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daveishan

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