Overleaf

Harvard University collaborates across countries with Overleaf

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About

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People

• **Ashley Craig**
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Goals

• Find an easier way than using desktop-based LaTeX to start writing in LaTeX from the very beginning of the research process

Approach

• Use Overleaf as a cloud-based tool for standalone and collaborative LaTeX-based document authoring

Results

• Better supported international collaboration with a fellow researcher based in Sydney on document authoring and editing

• Easier pushing of latest versions of key data files to papers, ensuring they are up to date with most recent results

> "The support for collaboration across countries was what was really attractive about Overleaf for me."

Ashley Craig is a first year graduate student in Economics at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He has embarked upon a six-year degree and needs an authoring tool that can accommodate both collaboration and the symbols and character sets that occur in his chosen field.

Although LaTeX is the accepted standard authoring tool for subjects such as Ashley's – as it allows for the numerous symbols and specialized character sets that occur – LaTeX traditionally is not an easy tool to use for collaboration. In the past, to collaborate in LaTeX meant emailing large files back and forth, and dealing with multiple versions of LaTeX desktop application files. This was not an ideal collaboration method for Ashley as he was working with academics across the globe at the University of Sydney in Australia and he wanted an easier way to work together. Ashley discovered Overleaf – its collaborative, cloud-based LaTeX writing platform was exactly what he required.

Collaborative efforts improved

"It's more efficient to be writing in LaTeX from the very beginning of the research process," says Ashley. "But collaboration is really painful with standard LaTeX. The support for collaboration across countries was what was really attractive about Overleaf for me."
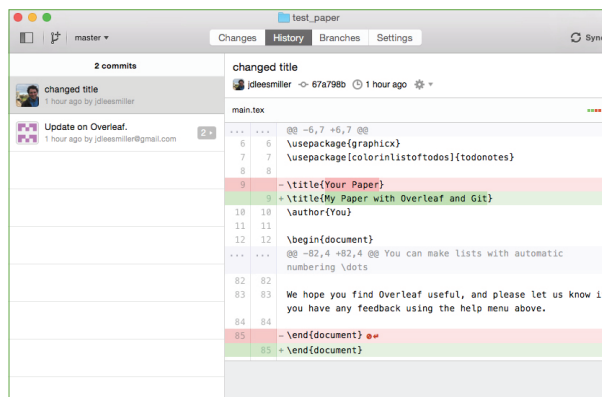
A co-author at Sydney uses Stata for data analysis. When the data or methodology is updated, they re-run the analyses and output the latest table in a .tex file for inclusion in the paper. Overleaf can handle the .tex file both for direct inclusion into the paper and also as an output file for the journal. The recent addition of Git-sync to Overleaf makes it even easier to push the latest versions of such data files to the paper, to ensure it is up to date with your most recent results.

Tracking and version control

Other functions that are well supported in Overleaf include simultaneous editing, the tracking of changes and comments and the merging of edits. Overleaf provides one source of truth for a file with version control.

Overleaf can also link to other popular programs such as Plot.ly, Stata, Matlab and R. More generally, any program that can output to a .tex file can be included in your workflow. Ashley has been very happy with the ease in which he can now write and collaborate on scientific documents and recommends Overleaf to his colleagues.

Ashley Craig