Zotero Architecture

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TCN 805: Content
Strategy for Technical
Communicators

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Executive summary

In this content architecture for Zotero help documentation, the team worked to optimize the structure of the site's content. This included removing unnecessary and duplicate content, improving vague headings and titles, reorganizing sections for a seamless flow of information, and creating a framework for governing future changes. Our main goal is to apply our findings to the site and present a model of a structured website.

The accompanying Zotero architecture Excel spreadsheet breaks down sections into clear, action-oriented headings. The spreadsheet acts as an extrapolation of the site map and wireframes, which we expand on in this architecture.

Site map

Based on our redesign, this site map displays how the Zotero help centre is clear and task-oriented for users. The previous structure was dense, inconsistent, and required users to hunt through long lists of mixed-priority topics. The new design organizes content into logical and predictable pathways that reflect how users actually use Zotero (See Figure 1).

At the top level, the site map separates Help centre, Developer resources, Forums, Contact us, and Frequently asked questions. This separation supports findability by splitting user support content from developer documentation and community interaction. It provides intuitive entry points for users.

The main redesign focus, the Help centre, is divided into seven categories:

- Install and begin
- Managing citations and output
- Organizing your library
- Settings and storage
- Using PDFs and notes
- Support and learning resources
- Policies and accessibility

These categories reflect what users use Zotero for. Each category holds topics with clear, descriptive headings and clear navigation. See the attached Zotero architecture Excel spreadsheet for a full list of the topic headings.
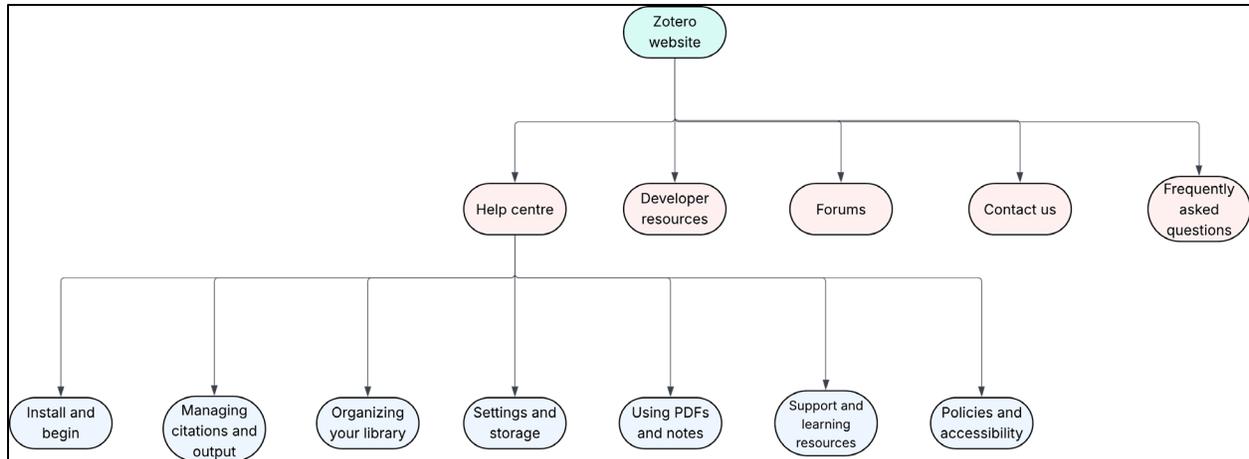
Figure 1: Site map after redesign

The first three categories—Install and begin, Managing citations and output, and Organizing your library—address high-priority tasks that new and returning users perform most frequently. Placing them at the start of the Help centre supports usability and cognitive load by reducing the number of scanning it takes to access popular topics. Mid-priority categories such as Settings and storage and Using PDFs and notes are after the first three topics. Lower priority information such as learning resources and policies are grouped at the end.

Overall, the redesigned site map improves content structure by displaying content based on user needs. There are multiple access points to common workflows, and the Help centre is the focus. Zotero's help centre is now predictable and aligned with both user goals and business priorities.

Wireframes

The home page wireframe shows a simplified and user-centred entry point for all support needs. The layout prioritizes clarity by presenting the main navigation categories upfront, reducing the amount of scanning required for users to identify where to begin. The page uses a clean, task-oriented card layout to highlight the most important areas: Help center, Forums, Frequently asked questions, Developer resources, and Contact links (See Figure 2).

This separation mirrors the redesigned IA, ensuring that users with different goals such as troubleshooting, learning how to get started, or browsing developer documentation immediately understand where to go. The predictable structure also reduces cognitive load by avoiding long, undifferentiated lists and giving each major pathway its own clear space on the page. Overall, this wireframe supports the IA goal of getting users to the right content quickly and confidently.
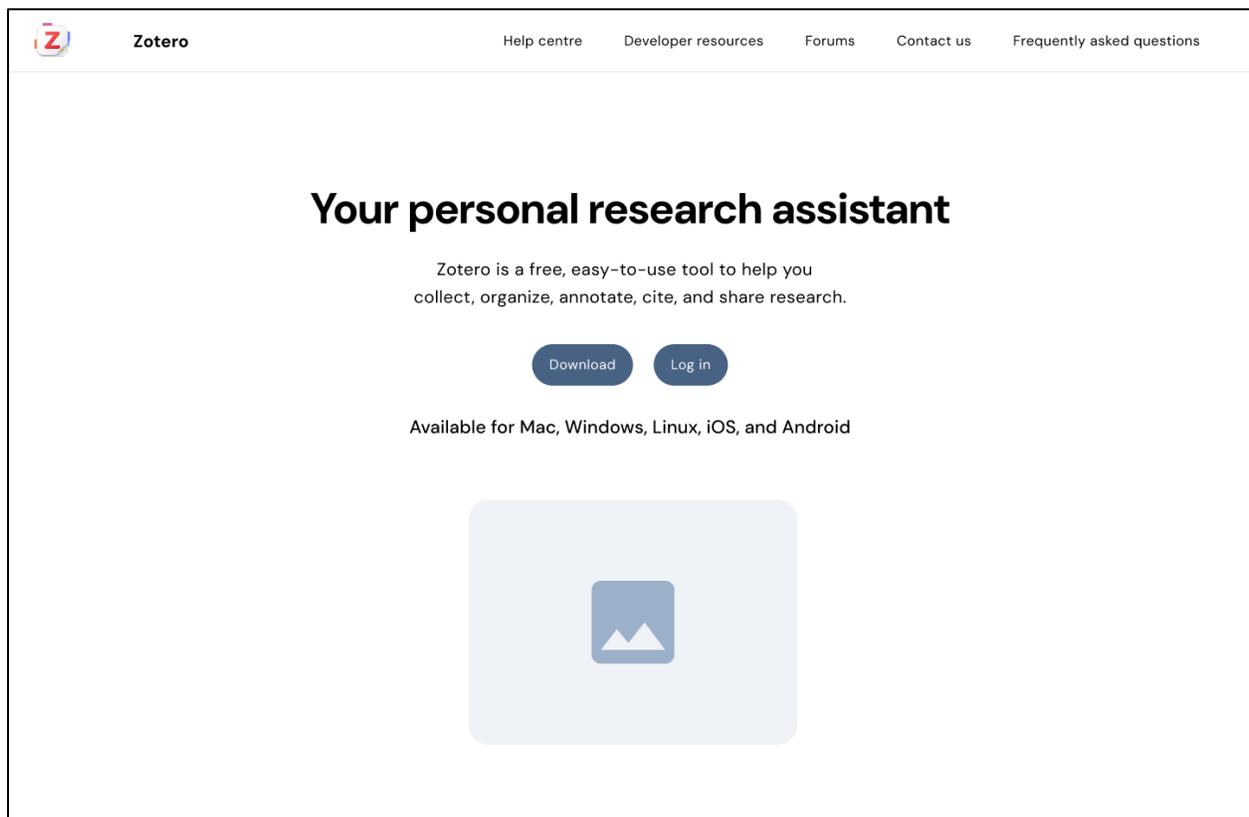

Figure 2: Wireframe for home page

The Help centre wireframe visually represents the restructured categories introduced in the IA (See Figure 3). Each category is displayed as a distinct, scannable section with clear headings such as Install and begin, Managing citations and output, and Organizing your

library. This reflects the priority order determined through the content strategy and user-task analysis.

The wireframe also demonstrates improved findability by grouping related tasks under the same category instead of scattering them across the page, which was a key flaw in the original IA. This structured visual layout makes it easier for users to explore topics and reduces duplication by guiding them toward the correct single-source article. The wireframe also leaves space for future content additions, reinforcing maintainability and scalability, which are two core goals of the governance plan.

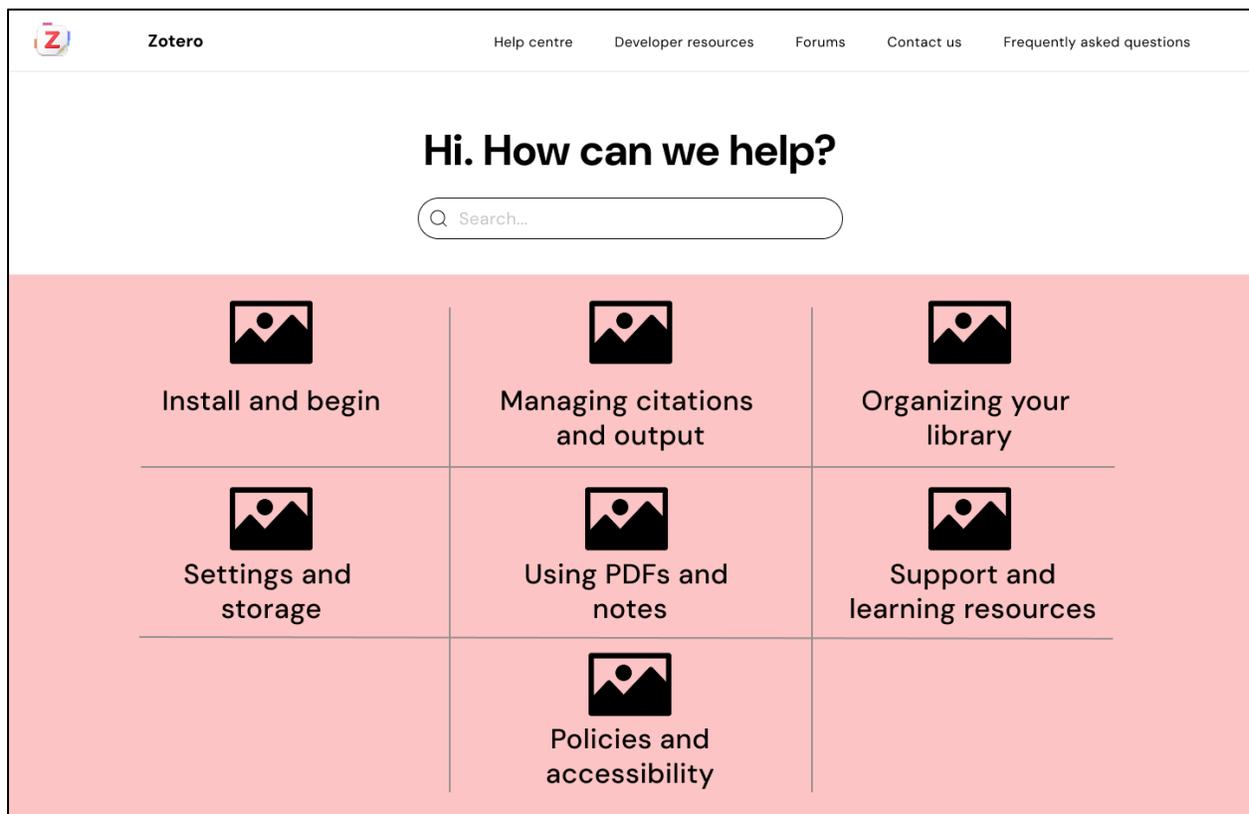Figure 3: Wireframe for help centre

Success criteria

The redesigned Zotero Help Center and CMS will be considered successful when it measurably improves user experience, findability, accessibility, and long-term maintainability of support content. Success will be evaluated using the following criteria, which align with our content strategy, IA spreadsheet, and governance plan.

Findability and navigation

The new IA focuses on helping users locate high-priority topics faster through simplified categories and clearer pathways. Success will be measured by:

- **Click depth to high-priority tasks:** Record the current number of clicks required to access articles.
  - **Target:** Users can reach these topics in 2-3 clicks.
  - **Measurement method:** Usability tests and tree testing.

- **Category-based task prediction:**
  - **Target:** At least 90% of test users can correctly predict which category to choose for the top 5 tasks (for example, "Where would you click to learn how to sync your library?").
  - **Measurement method:** Card sorting or moderated tree tests.

- **Improved heading clarity and layout:**
  - **Target:** Users can locate the correct section within an article 20% faster due to clearer headings and subheadings.
  - **Measuring method:** Before/after comparison of topic heading structure. Moderated usability tests with time-on-task measurement for finding a specific section.

Content consistency & reduction of duplication

Because duplication was one of the main problems identified, success focuses on improving reuse and reducing redundancy.

- Reduction of duplicate content:
  - **Target:** At least 90% of duplicate instances are removed or replaced with links to a single source topic.
  - **Measurement method:** A before-and-after content audit, comparing the old IA and new IA. Also, biannual audits will help to identify new duplicates.

- Consistent structure across all topics:
  - **Target:** 100% of new or updated topics follow the standard structure: short summary --> task --> focused headings --> related links.
  - **Measurement method:** Review checklist for internal content structure rules (governed by Oxygen XML Editor).

Accessibility & inclusivity improvements

- WCAG-aligned content updates:
  - **Target:** 100% of new or updated topics meet WCAG 2.1 AA requirements, including alt text, semantic headings, descriptive links, and accessible multimedia.
  - **Measurement method:** Evaluate each page using an internal accessibility checklist and automated WCAG scanning tools. Verify keyboard navigation and reading order using NVDA screen-reader testing to confirm a smooth, inclusive user experience.

- Findability of policy and accessibility pages:
  - **Target:** 90% of test users find Privacy, Accessibility, and Data Security topics within one category selection.
  - **Measurement method:** Usability testing with specific findability tasks.

User satisfaction & task completion

These criteria ensure the redesigned documentation meets user expectations.

- **Higher task-completion success rates:**
  - **Target:** ≥ 85% of test users complete essential workflows (installing, syncing, citing, creating bibliographies) using only help center content.
  - **Measurement method:** Measured through UX testing with a script that includes:
    - What the facilitator will say
    - Tasks the user must complete
    - Follow-up questions
    - Instructions, constraints, and scenarios

- **Decrease in support tickets:**
  - **Target:** 20% decrease in repeated support tickets or forum posts about topics already documented.
  - **Measurement method:** Comparing support logs, forum posts, and search logs before and after IA launch.

Maintainability and governance

- **Faster updates through single-sourcing:**
  - **Target:** 50% reduction in content update time because editing occurs once in the main source page.

- **Method:** Internal time tracking and content-owner reporting.

- **Clear ownership and lifecycle tracking:**
  - All main categories have assigned content owners.
  - Each article has:
    - An owner
    - Review date
    - Status label (Active, needs updating, needs rewrite, deprecated, archive)
  - **Measurement method:** Quarterly governance reviews.

Continuous measurement and improvement

- **Capture baseline analytics:** Before implementing the new IA, collect:
  - Search term data
  - Page views
  - Forum/support question patterns
  - Bounce rates
  - Duplicate content counts
  - Click-paths

- **Re-evaluate after 3–6 months:**
  - Compare analytics before and after implementation.
  - Evaluate which categories users navigate successfully.
  - Assess whether cross-linking improves topic discovery.

- **Iterate content based on evidence**
  - Adjust categories, add missing links, and refine topic structures.
  - Update content owners on required changes.
  - Archive low-value or outdated pages.
  - Ensure WCAG compliance continues over time.

This ensures that the CMS and IA remain aligned with evolving user needs, product updates, and ongoing governance requirements.

Governance plan

Our support content must be checked on and updated through a continuous lifecycle. Content governance will operate as an ongoing system of the following:

- Planning
- Creating
- Reviewing
- Updating

Planning and maintaining content

Content needs to go through a quarterly inventory, biannual audit, and individual article lifecycles. Having these reviews in place informs the team about what content needs to be improved, along with how to improve new content. This also helps Zotero stay up to date with evolving best practices.

Quarterly inventory

Every quarter, the technical writing team needs to update the content inventory. This inventory must capture:

- Performance metrics
- Sections, headings, and media
  - Media includes videos, photos, and links
- All headings

Doing this inventory quarterly prevents the documentation from becoming redundant and disorganized. It also acts as a basis for planning future content and finding gaps in the content.

Biannual audit

Twice a year, the team needs to audit the content. Content must be flagged for what needs to be revised, merged, or archived using a standardized rubric. Audits need to cover:

- How accurate the content is
- Alignment with the internal style guide
- Redundancy or overlap
- Outdated UI references and technical writing terminology

Although the goal is to have two audits a year, an audit may be needed beforehand. This happens if a new major feature is released, UI elements change, or users repeatedly ask the same question in forums.

Article lifecycles

Every article needs to be assigned to a content owner so that individual can keep track of the content quality. Every article must be assigned an owner, review date, and status label. The individual assigned to the article must update the label accordingly:

- Active
- Needs updating
- Needs rewrite
- Depreciated
- Archive

Having these plans in place helps with staying up to date on new releases and reinforces the content lifecycle.

Who maintains and governs content

Authority over the content must be split between different individuals to maintain efficiency. Assignments are based on preventing real user pain points. Authority will be split up amongst four groups (See Table 1).

Authority group	Responsibilities
Content governance lead	- Approving new support content - Maintaining the style guide, IA, and hierarchy - Managing quarterly inventories and biannual audits - Overseeing archiving and large-scale rewrites
Writers, Support team	- Create and update assigned content pages - Follow required standards for structure, tone, and accessibility - Identify content gaps or inaccuracies
Engineers & SMEs	- Notify the governance lead of upcoming future releases - Validate technical accuracy during audits - Provide changelogs for updates that influence documentation
Marketing	Provide a monthly report to the writers about repeated user issues they identify

Table 1: Group responsibilities for documentation

Keeping content up to date and relevant over time

Our team will achieve long-term relevance by checking the content at every stage of the content lifecycle. This means every update, rewrite, or new article must follow these requirements:

- Connect content updates directly to what changes in Zotero

- Keep note of what users are struggling with
- Track new feature additions, redesign, or removal

This prevents outdated instructions, UI mismatches, and gaps that confuse users. Monthly patterns from support tickets, forum questions, and search logs will highlight topics that must be changed. Moreover, we'll gain insight into unclear topics or pages that no longer meet user expectations. These indicators help us revise content based on real behaviour.

Articles that users rely on must stay accurate, and pages with low value or outdated information must be updated or archived. This creates an ongoing cycle where support content is continuously shaped by user needs.

Internal standard documents

To maintain the strategy, the technical writer team and governance lead will maintain a living set of internal standards:

- Style guide
- Content templates
- Content structure rules (governed by Oxygen XML Editor)
- Accessibility requirements

These standards will be revised and updated during biannual audits. Information about updating these documents will be determined by external research of best standards, internal team evaluations, and user research. These documents must be consistently updated with wording refinement or new conventions.

How governance strengthens the business

By having routine reviews of style guides and content, maintaining high-quality content is ingrained in Zotero's business rather than a costly afterthought. Governance practices let teams know who is responsible for what content, what standards are in place for content quality, and metrics for tracking improvement measures. Without a clear framework that sets rules, workflows, and standards, content creation becomes chaotic. This plan will help avoid the following:

- Legal risks
- Wasted resources
- Ineffective content
- Costly overhauls