A guide to the DFC research database

The DFC research database contributes to the collective understanding of children's rights in the digital environment, as set out in the UNCRC General comment No. 25.

About this database

DFC believes that access to relevant, reliable, and quality research is vital to safeguard children's rights in the digital environment. To be able to respond to technological and political changes in the digital environment rapidly, child rights advocates, civil society actors, and other agents need research evidence. The goal of our database is to support the realisation of children's rights in the digital environment by sharing knowledge and research insights in the public domain while respecting copyright and fair use principles.

What's included in the database?

DFC database includes resources in the form of peer-reviewed academic publications and reports published by international organisations whose work substantially concerns children's rights.

For all our research we make sure that the resources we find are reliable and come from credible sources. For peer-reviewed academic publications, it is usually a straightforward process, because academic research is scrutinised at the onset in various stages. These are usually in the form of institutional research ethics reviews, peer reviews, and editorial reviews. Credible academic sources are also indexed in relevant bibliographic databases for the field. For non-academic research and publications, we need more caution. Therefore, we devised a system where we assess the credibility of research based on the criteria below.

Criteria for assessing research credibility

Authorship: Who are the authors? Who conducted the research? What are their affiliations?

Purpose: What is the purpose of the publication? Why was the research undertaken? Has the research been adopted as the basis for design change or legal/regulatory/treaty frameworks?

Funding: Who funded the research? Is the funding from public or private sources? Is the research transparent about funding? Is the funding independent of commercial interests? Is the funding independent of political interests? If there isn't any declaration of funding, is there an institutional sponsorship? (e.g., university, private or public research centre, company).

Methodology: How were the data collected and analysed? Is the methodology sound and accurate? Does the research make use of secondary data? Are the methods transparent? (i.e., sufficient information provided for others to replicate the research) Are the methods unique? (i.e., sufficient information to understand why it is relevant and important – e.g., whistleblower or analysis of multiple studies). Are the authors clear about the limitations of their research? (and not overclaiming) Is the research valid? Does it measure what it claims to measure?

Ethical and peer review: Has the research passed an ethical review by a reputable institution? Has the research undergone independent peer review?

Children's views: Was the research consulted with and/or seriously acknowledged children's views?

Access: Is there a freely available and open-access full-text report or publication? Is the publication behind a paywall? Can the publication be accessed via public libraries?

Bias: Is the analysis of the research unbiased? Does the author examine more than one perspective?

Relevance: Is the research relevant? Does the research focus on a specific geography? Does the research focus on a little-studied group (e.g., children with disabilities). Does the research cover an emerging topic? When was the research conducted, are the findings still relevant?

References: What types of resources does the publication refer to? Are they credible?

Crediting sources

The database is made possible thanks to research, reports, and other credible resources, which we have carefully selected and summarised. Please make sure to acknowledge the original authors of those documents. Additionally, we welcome a citation to our database if you have relied substantially on our curations, tagging and notes. The information about included publications in the database is of three types:

- Abstracts of articles written by academic authors: please cite the original source

- Executive summaries of reports by authors/organisations: please cite the original source

- DFC notes (summaries, key takeaways, and notes on methodology): please cite the DFC

Acknowledgements
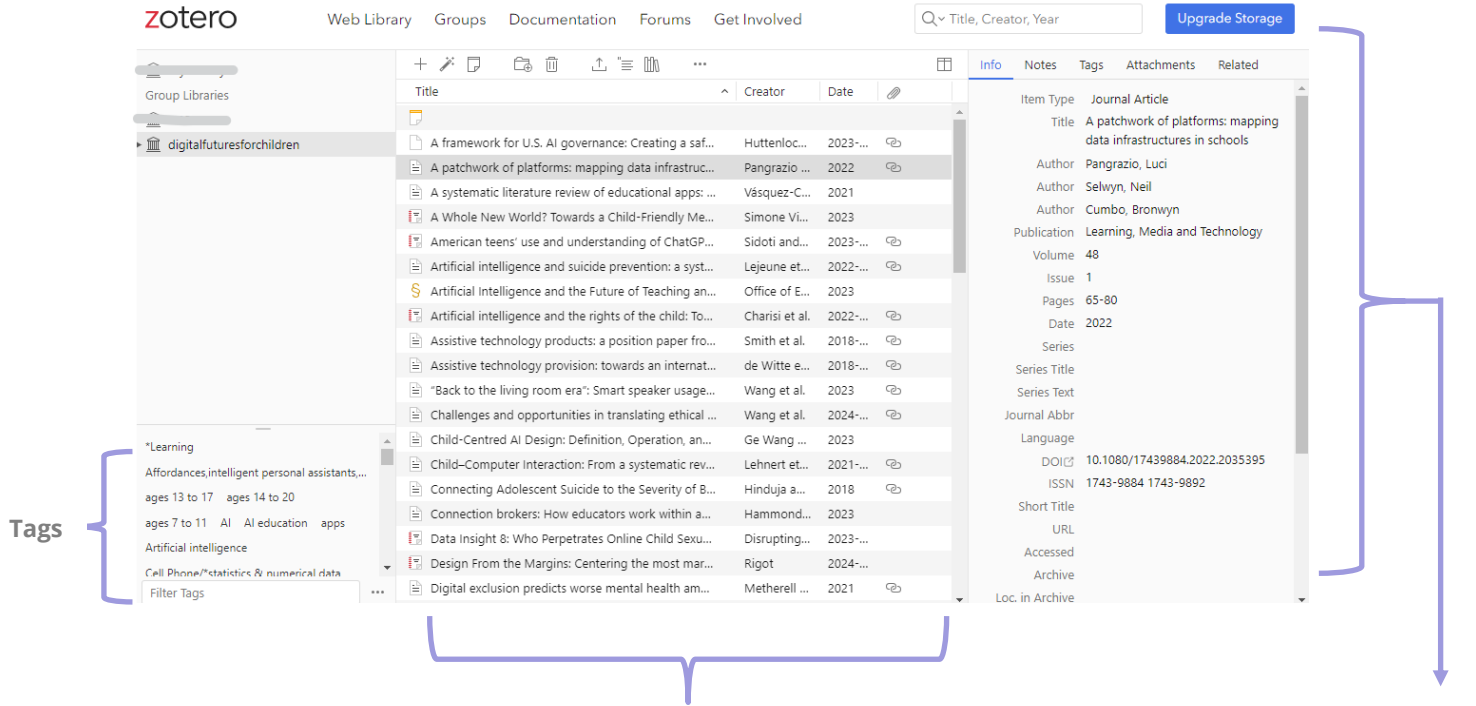
The work for this database has been led by Didem Özkul, with entries also created by Gazal Shekhawat, Saumyadeep Mandal and Zichen Hu.

How to navigate the DFC database

Zotero is an open-source, non-profit software to help users organise, collect and cite research. The DFC database is currently hosted as a 'shared group library' on the platform. We chose Zotero for its public accessibility, as well as searchability and tagging features. It does not require users to sign up to access it: you can get started by taking some simple steps.

Database home

From our publicly available link, the database will look as below.

From the home page or landing page, the middle section lists the research included in the database. Currently, it contains over 100 publications. These can be sorted by author, year published, title etc. Wherever possible, they include hyperlinks to the original publication.

Searching for items

You can search for publications on the top right section of the page.
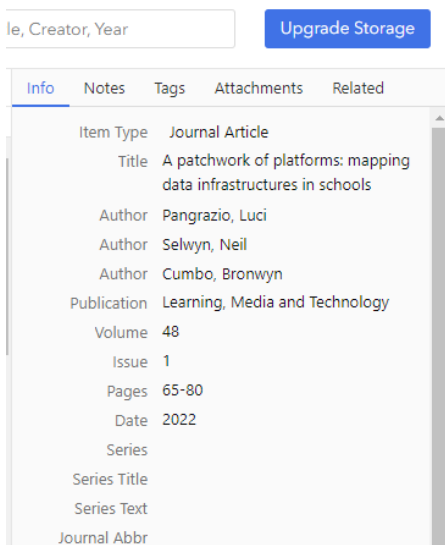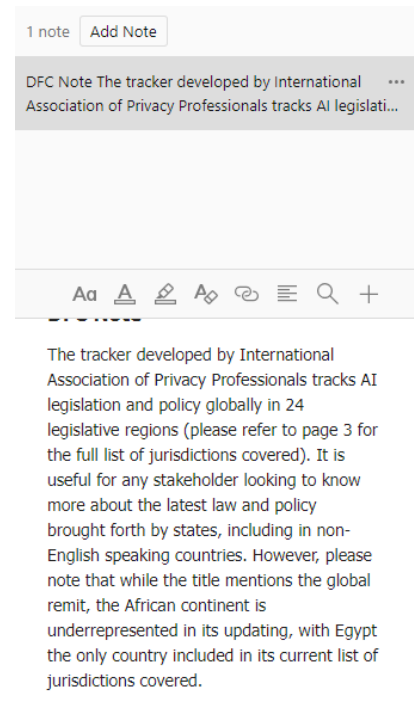

The Zotero search function will search titles, authors, years, as well as other available information (often including the abstract or summary) and the DFC's notes about a publication.

Info and DFC key takeaways

In the Info section, you'll find the official information for each publication, including item type, publication year, URLs, authors names, editors etc. If you scroll down, you'll generally find the original published abstract or executive summary, where available.
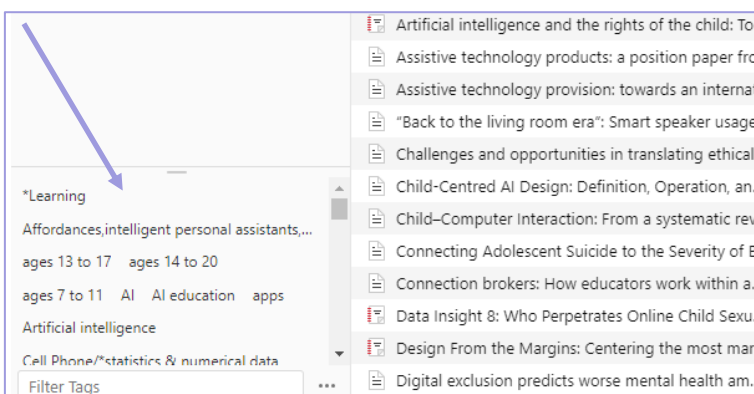

In the Notes section, you will generally find a short commentary from the DFC about the publication – why it has been included, its strengths or limitations, key takeaways, and stakeholders who may benefit from the research.
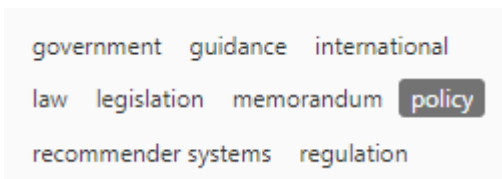

Tags

If you are new to the field OR looking for topic-specific recommendations, our tags are designed for ease of use.


You can find the tags that publications in the database have been catalogued with at the bottom right of the page: treat them as thematic categories or research topics. For example, in the Info section, the tags could be [policy] [global south] [AI] [survey] etc. to tell you the topics it covers.

Clicking on a tag will show you all publications which address the theme. For example, the [policy] tag will have dozens of publications discussing policymaking, whether these are reports or academic articles or other outputs.

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Once you click on one tag (such as 'policy'), Zotero will narrow down all other tags/or topics of the selected publications and show you what other topics (alongside policy) they may cover.

For example, after selecting [policy], you may click on tags such as [UK] or [AI] to look for more specific guidance. Right-clicking on a selected tag will deselect it, so you can filter and un-filter as you like!
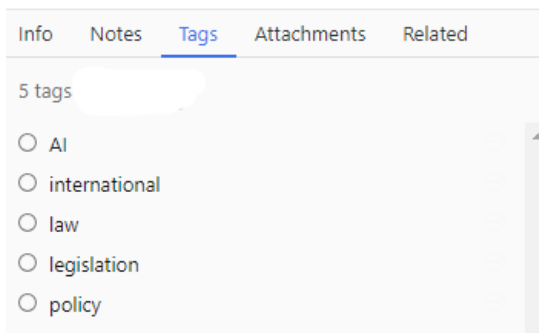

Clicking on the Tag tab will show you all the descriptive tags added to the publication.

Exporting the database

There are several ways to store information from the DFC database:

- Customise a personal database: if you wish to sign up for Zotero, you can simply copy/paste or drag and drop your selections into your library, where you will be able to edit the list, add your own notes and tags.

- As a bibliography/longlist of citations: you can export the whole database or selected files by clicking on the top icons of your Zotero page.

- To generate your own bibliography, click on the books icon:
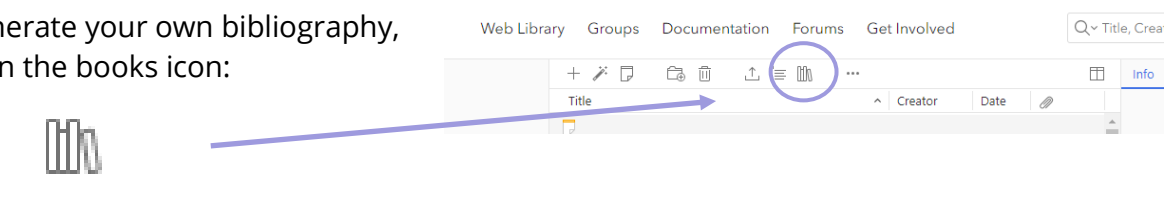
- Note that you can choose from 9000+ citation styles (we recommend APA 7th edition).

- To save your search results as an MS Excel/Google Sheets file, click on the Export button:

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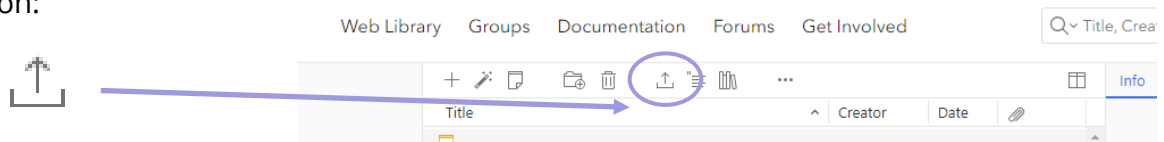
- Select CSV from the dropdown menu (or select other formats if you are familiar with bibliographic software).

Additional resources

- [Zotero Quick Access Guide](#)

- [What is high-quality evidence?](#)

Suggesting sources

We welcome suggestions for new sources, especially related to under-represented groups of children, countries or topics. You can suggest resources by emailing us at info@dfc-centre.net