



KEVIN O'NEILL / STAFF ARTIST

Saved by the click

Instapaper simply saves Web articles

Every now and then someone designs a useful application that does exactly what it's supposed to do.

Instapaper.com is just such an application. It's actually a website and an application. The purpose of Instapaper is to save information you come across online to read later.

Of course, there already are ways you can save items you don't have time to read or want to save for later viewing. You can bookmark them, email the link to yourself or even copy and paste the content into another program. Instapaper lets you save articles with a single click, and you can read them later on your mobile device even if you're not online.



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InSites

Quick and easy

You can set up a free account on the website which allows you to save and view your content. Registration and activation of your account is the fastest and easiest setup I've ever encountered on a website. Simply click on "Create Account," enter your email and pick a password and you're instantly taken to your new account page. There are no forms to fill out or emailed links you have to wait for to complete the process.

The app is available at Apple's App Store for \$4.99. It's designed primarily for the iPhone and iPad, but it also will work with Kindle devices and electronic readers that use the ePub format. The site claims the app is "very mobile-friendly" and may work with other smart phones.

You can read the content on the website in the form of a link to the site it originated on or a text version

on Instapaper.com. There are options to download versions for printing, or to view via Kindle or other ePub devices.

Content saved to the website is automatically downloaded to your Instapaper-enabled mobile device. Advertisements and other page clutter are stripped out of the saved content, and it is formatted to be easily read on a cell phone or iPad. The information is saved independent of its original website. This means you can read it offline, and you don't have to worry about links expiring or websites shutting down.

Several ways to save

There are several ways you can send content to Instapaper. A "Read Later" bookmarklet can be dragged from the Instapaper site to your browser's toolbar. Simply click on it whenever you come across content you wish to save, and it's quickly sent to your account.

You also get a unique Instapaper email address that can be used to send content to the site. This works well for information you want to save from a page that requires you to log in. For instance, I receive several regular e-newsletters in my email account. If I want to save an item from one of them, I just forward it to my Instapaper email, circumventing the need to log in to my regular email when I want to retrieve it.

Many apps and websites support sending pages directly to Instapaper. Google Reader, Twitter and StumbleUpon are among the more than 140 apps and sites that have a one-click connection to Instapaper. There is information on the site to help Web publishers integrate with Instapaper.

Instapaper prides itself on its ease of use and simple mission, but there

are a few bells and whistles. The home page offers options to help you organize your saved data. You can create folders to store similar articles together. Unfortunately, you can't create subfolders within the folders. You also can archive items that you want to store indefinitely. However, there's no search function that would allow you easily to locate a specific article among the many you may have saved.

Sharing and customizing

You also can link to several social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. This allows you to share saved content with your contacts at these sites. There's also a share button on every item that allows you to email it to whomever you like.

A browse button lets you view articles picked by other users or the site's editor. The app has buttons to view editor's picks, friends' picks or just browse the Web.

The app has some features to help you customize your viewing experience. Dark mode gives you light type on a dark background. You can lock the rotation so the page doesn't flip when you turn your device. You also can set the pages to either scroll or flip. Finally, sharing settings and bookmarklets can be set up in the app as well.

The designs of the website and app are geared toward function and ease of use. They're mainly type with minimal use of simple graphics. The typography is simple and tasteful, with a logical hierarchy.

Combining Instapaper.com with the mobile app is a simple and inexpensive way to get more mileage out of your electronic reader.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at koneill@timeshamrock.com with links to your favorite websites.