

# YAML-embedded BibTeX files in Pandoc

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Recently I've been writing documents with LaTeX again. It's a lot of fun, and very rewarding — I highly recommend it. LaTeX doesn't lend itself to editing on a smartphone, however, and that's where I do a lot of note-taking. But Markdown is perfect for the task.

Inspired by John Godlee's post [1], I've created a build file that reads in a regular old .md note and uses a combination of xelatex, pandoc and some templates to create PDF and HTML copies. Titles, authors, and bibliographies are all specified in a YAML block at the top, e.g.

```
---
title: Some very important note
author: hannah
date: 2024-09-26
bib: references.bib
---
```

This is some other important note [@hannah20240925].

Pandoc has a few ways to handle citations:

1. `--citeproc` works, but the resulting .tex file uses `\citep` sequences: I'd rather use vanilla `\cite`, right?<sup>1</sup>
2. The citations extension to Markdown also works, but I would have to pass in the bibliography as a parameter to Pandoc. I *could* do that with some grep magic, but it seems fragile

My ideal workflow is that Pandoc converts [@hannah20240925] to `\cite{hannah20240925}`, with my LaTeX template handling the actual citation process. And I found it: `--biblatex` does exactly that. My build file contains the line

```
pandoc -o $OUTPUT --biblatex -s --template=$TEMPLATES/template.tex $INPUT
```

and the LaTeX template handles citations like so:

```
[...]
$if(bib)$
  \usepackage{biblatex}
  \addbibresource{$bib$}
$endif$
[...]
$if(bib)$
  \printbibliography
$endif$
\end{document}
```

My Markdown notes are converted into LaTeX, and from there into a PDF<sup>2</sup>, a standalone HTML file and a partial “bare” file for HD-DN.

## References

- [1] John Godlee. *A Pandoc template for converting markdown letters to LaTeX PDFs*. <https://johngodlee.xyz/posts/2019-10-10-md-letter/>. 2019.

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<sup>1</sup>For conversion from LaTeX to HTML I do use `--citeproc`. This works very well, but there's not a way to template the output (as far as I can see).

<sup>2</sup>Yes, this article is available as a PDF.