

FAQ for K-12 Online Content Project

GENERAL

Q. What are these online content resources?

A. Online content resources – also known as “online library databases” – are indexed collections of magazines, journals, books, newspaper articles, abstracts, encyclopedic entries, photographs and other information that has been checked for accuracy and reliability by publishers and then licensed for distribution in online/electronic format. Colleges and universities were the lead users of online databases but their use is increasing in recent years in public libraries and schools.

Q. Are these resources free?

A. The resources are paid for through a statewide contract and then made available at **no cost** to school districts, charter schools and directly to K-12 students who are unable to obtain access at school.

Q. Are these resources going to be available on an ongoing basis?

A. Yes. These funds are continuously appropriated. The State Library has the option of contracting with the current providers -- ProQuest, Encyclopedia Britannica and TeachingBooks.net -- for up to five years, at which point there will be a comprehensive evaluation of the program.

CONTENT

Q. These kinds of resources are new to me. How can I quickly learn how to use them?

A. Each of the online content providers conducts free webinars to help users. We have a comprehensive list of training sessions listed in our [Calendar of Upcoming Trainings](#). Some of the trainings provide a general overview, while others focus on how to use the resources with specific subjects like STEM, the arts and history. Other trainings are age-specific or focus groups or demographics, including how English-language learners can use the resources. There are also trainings explaining how parents of young children can use the databases to help with homework, especially Spanish-speaking parents.

Q. How are these products better than what I can get on the web?

A. These online content resources have been checked for accuracy and reliability. The content of these particular providers was reviewed by a team of expert educators and librarians as part of a competitive bid process.

Q. I've seen some library databases that are different than these three. Are there more resources like this available?

A. The annual amount allocated for this project is \$3 million, which limits the number of online content providers that can be offered at no cost to California schools. Many local libraries provide a selection of online resources. Check out your local library's website – and get a local library card!

Q. Do these resources meet Common Core and other standards like the Next Generation Science Standards and the new History and Social Studies standards from the California Department of Education?

A. Absolutely! These online content resources are aligned to the latest state standards, especially the Common Core. They wouldn't have been eligible for this project if they weren't. The state's [Model School Library Standards](#) consider online library databases to be important learning tools. For more information on all the California educational standards, see the [website at the Department of Education](#).

ACCESS

Q. How I can get access – for myself, as well as for my students? Do I need to abandon our current electronic learning platform to use these resources? Do I need a password?

A. Access is principally provided on a district-by-district basis. Direct access to the resources can be made available through learning management platforms that already exist for students. Direct access can also be provided for school computers. Access may also be supplied remotely through a username/password authentication process.

To provide access, the key is to have your district's IT lead fill out the form used by all three content providers [HERE](#). And if you want to know if a district has filled out the form, check the [online list of districts that need to complete the form](#).

SECURITY

Q. My IT department is very cautious about student data privacy security. Have these online content providers been vetted? Is it safe for our students to use them? Will security laws regarding students be violated in any way?

A. All three online content providers have signed a Student Data Privacy Agreement that incorporates every law on the books regarding student privacy. As an additional precaution, the agreements have been reviewed by the California Student Privacy Alliance and [are listed by them as approved](#) for use.

FULFILLMENT

Q. Is this a public library project or a public schools project?

A. At its core, this is a public schools project. These online resources have been purchased with taxpayer dollars to help California's 6.2 million school kids succeed. The California State Library oversees the

project because of its work involving databases and online resources for other state entities but these services are for K-12 students.

Q. Do charter schools get access?

A. Yes. Charter schools are public schools and can get direct access.

Q. What about students who are homeschooled or in private school?

A. All K-12 students in California can get access to these resources. Two of the content providers – Encyclopedia Britannica and TeachingBooks.net – are also voluntarily providing direct access through private schools and public libraries. Technical staff from public libraries and private schools should complete the [technical form for access](#) for Britannica and TeachingBooks.net. For the ProQuest content, California K-12 students who are not served through a K-12 public school district or charter school may request direct username/password access through ProQuest’s customer support at 800-521-72971 or by emailing customer_service@proquest.com.

Q. Why can’t private schools have these library databases provided directly through their school and online portals?

A. The funding for this project comes from California taxpayers to support public education. Under the law, public school dollars can’t directly pay for the operation of private schools.

Q. But two of the content providers are providing private school access, right?

A. Online content providers may voluntarily provide access to private schools and libraries and two of them are doing that. But it’s illegal for a contract paid with public dollars to require vendors to provide the same services to private schools. Private schools and public libraries are extremely fortunate that two of the three online content providers have voluntarily opted to include these entities in this project.

Have more questions that we can use in this FAQ? Email Marybeth.barber@library.ca.gov.