

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 through an online electronic format. Colleges and universities were the lead users of online databases initially, but today public libraries and schools are utilizing them as well, and content types have expanded to include music, streaming video, and other digital content and tools.

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 in most cases to local libraries. Some content providers have voluntarily provided access to the entire state of California or included independent schools as well as public ones. The contracts with ProQuest, Gale, Britannica and TeachingBooks are education funds allocated to the Riverside County Office of Education as the fiscal sponsor, and the program is fulfilled by the California State Library.

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

A. Yes. These funds are continuously appropriated in the state’s K-12 education budget -- they fall under the definition of education funding defined by Proposition 98. The State Library will periodically examine the usage and usefulness of the individual resources and inform the education and library field well in advance of any changes.

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](#) or the [Catalog Listings of Upcoming Trainings](#). There’s also a [list of previous trainings and webinar sessions](#) that can be reviewed anytime.

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. Many students (and adults!) assume that resources found on the internet through a search-engine are fine for classwork. And sometimes they are. But sometimes they aren’t. Traditional library databases, on the other hand, are indexed collection of magazines, journals, newspaper articles, abstracts, and other information. Sometimes the content is crafted by expert editors from the database

providers. Others consist of content from various publishers – from newspapers to academic journals - that’s been checked for accuracy and then licensed for the database platform.

Today’s school and public libraries strive to include these suites of content as a supplement to the curricula, and to assist students and educators with research, with the scholarly books and articles that are not included on the open web or require a subscription.

Q. I’ve seen other library resources besides these. Are there more resources like this available?

A. The field of online library resources includes many more platforms, tools, and suites of content. Many local libraries provide a selection of online resources for all ages and subjects. 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 framework from the CA 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 information on 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, or charter by charter 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 if a single-sign-on option is not available for your institution.

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 the online content providers have signed an updated 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 as vetted 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 6.1 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. The bulk of these resources are available through local libraries and all school-aged children can get access. Three of the content providers – Gale, Britannica and TeachingBooks.net – are also voluntarily providing direct access through private schools. IT staff from public libraries and private schools should complete the [technical form for access](#) (hosted by TeachingBooks) for set-up instructions. For the ProQuest content, California K-12 students who are not served through a K-12 public school district or charter school may access most of the resources through their local library (with the exception of the PBS Video Collection and ProQuest Central Student).

Q. Why can't private schools have all 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. Three of the four content providers have volunteered to make access available for private schools, while much of the other content may be accessed by all K-12 students through the local library.

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

A. Online content providers may voluntarily provide access to private schools and libraries and three of them are doing that. But it is 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.

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