



J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College Libraries

Your first stop for information and research needs!

Persistent Links & Copyright

What are my options for providing reading material to my students?

When you find a worthwhile reading in a research database, you have several options as to how to make this work available to your students. Among these are making photocopies, putting a copy on reserve in the library, downloading a copy and posting it to your Blackboard course, or linking to the article in the database through Blackboard. Issues to consider when deciding on how to make reading material available to students include not only which option would be more convenient for you and your students but also which option falls within Fair Use copyright guidelines. Providing persistent links to articles or books is a one-stop shopping option that allows the database vendor to handle the copyright issues.

What are persistent links?

Persistent links, also called PURLS (**P**ersistent **U**niform **R**esource **L**ocators), stable links, or durable links, are Web addresses that remain consistent and seldom change over time. For example, the JSRCC library home page can always be reliably reached at <http://library.reynolds.edu>. However, a link to an article in one of the library's databases could change each time you try to access it (unless you know how to reconfigure it), because databases often create temporary session links at the moment you access them.

What are the advantages to providing persistent links?

- Responsibility falls on the database vendor to handle the copyright issues (e.g., to pay the copyright holder when there is a requirement for that to be done). You don't have to go through the hassle of getting the necessary permissions to: place copyrighted materials in the library's reserves, photocopy the material, or download the full article on your Bb course site.
- Familiarizes students with research databases. Linking provides students the opportunity to see and use the database without having the added responsibility of evaluating and choosing the information from the database.
- Students do not have to come to the library. They can access articles anytime and anywhere.

Why should I use persistent links when I can simply download an article into my Blackboard course?

The difference lies in the concept of making a copy. Material downloaded into your Bb course site(s) are subject to U.S. copyright law (Title 17, US Code).

For example, imagine your friend has asked you to watch a video he has made. He can either invite you over to his house to watch the video, or he can make a copy of the video for you to watch on your own. If your friend gives you a copy of the video, you could conceivably make another copy and give it to someone else - or - for that matter, make many copies to distribute, without your friend's permission. You are probably not that type of person. But imagine someone breaks into your office and takes the video and makes and distributes many copies of your friend's video.

On the other hand, if you go over to your friend's house and watch the video then all the security concerns are your friend's and there is no way that you could be responsible for the distribution of unauthorized copies of the video, on purpose or by accident.

The above scenario can be compared to downloading versus linking. If you link to the article, it is like going to the database's house to view the article. If someone hacks into the database's server and steals the article, it is not your fault. By linking into the database you are taking the necessary security measures to ensure that only authorized users can access this copyrighted material.¹

For more information on copyright issues, see our online guide located at:

<http://libguides.reynolds.edu/copyright>

How long will a persistent link stay active?

A persistent link will remain active as long as JSRCC Library or our consortiums continue to subscribe to the given database. In other cases, a database vendor may reorganize its database collections, change their domain name or lose licensing rights to certain periodicals. It is advisable to check links occasionally to make sure they are still active.

1. Adapted from Persistent Links & Copyright [web page], Samford University Library