Access to Library Licensed Electronic Resources

Unlike print acquisitions, electronic resources generally are not purchased by libraries but are instead licensed by libraries from the publisher or provider platform. Access to and usage of these electronic databases, journals, and books are subject to each provider’s specified terms of use and the UC San Diego Library is usually required to sign contracts which govern how online materials can be accessed and used. This is normally the only way these resources are available. However, the Library does negotiate the terms of these contracts to ensure that we can both meet the requirements and preserve our existing rights as covered by U.S. copyright laws. The information below does not apply to “open-access resources” which may appear in our catalog, but are freely available to the public and are indicated as such.

Access to licensed electronic resources at UC San Diego is usually restricted by our licenses specifically to current faculty, staff, and students. In most cases, the Library is also able to arrange for public access through workstations located physically within the campus library buildings. The prices we are charged by publishers and providers for electronic access are often based on the full-time enrollment (FTE) of our campus or the FTE of the expected user group on campus (often including numbers of faculty for specific departments). Our pricing is also based on the fact that we are an academic, non-profit institution (corporate or for-profit institutional rates tend to be much higher). Most of the licenses we sign limit use to educational research and specifically exclude commercial use. For this reason we are unable to extend electronic access to our corporate partners or affiliates or to outside non-profit entities, even if they are collaborating on projects. Our licenses prohibit us from providing access outside of our contracted authorized user base. We may provide remote access from off-campus to our licensed electronic resources, but only for current faculty, staff, and students and only through secure authentication to the campus network using their active directory password. On-campus wireless access to these materials is also limited to UC San Diego faculty, students, and staff (and also requires secure log-in).

Access to the licensed content should never be directly transferred to another entity or person through sharing of passwords. Many of our licenses do provide for some very limited sharing of articles or chapters with scholarly colleagues outside our organization but this should never be in systematic or bulk amounts (most licenses use the term “insignificant amount” to describe what is allowable for scholarly sharing). Materials should never be posted openly on the web or provided to file sharing sites (e.g. Sci-Hub).

Publishers and providers are interested in protecting their intellectual property and their revenue streams. What may seem like hindrances to use for our patrons are often restrictions set purposefully in place to limit harm to a publisher’s copyright or potential abuse in an age of easily transferable technology. Publishers will usually not even allow us to directly email electronic copies of files (like PDFs) to fulfill inter-library loan requests—we have to use a secure electronic system. Technological limits on both amounts and types of copying (to both print and electronic format) are also put in place to enforce copyright compliance and discourage the transfer of large amounts of information. Systematic downloading is also prohibited and the providers we license materials from will often automatically cut off our service if such use is detected. If you are interested in data-mining or have a special project that you think will be in conflict with our terms of use, please contact the Library for advice.

Redacted copies of most of our specific publisher and product licenses are posted.
If there are any questions regarding the license requirements of UC San Diego electronic resources, please contact our Electronic Resources Acquisitions Unit: electroniclib@ucsd.edu.

SCN: Revised August 14, 2017