INTRODUCTORY GUIDE:
ACCESSING FULL TEXT JOURNAL ARTICLES

A simple guide to how people without access to university libraries can access journal articles for free (legally).

> " **Research that could be useful is often hidden behind a paywall – or seems that way. This guide summarises ways in which you can access other full text journal articles for free (legally).** "

People working in Government will sometimes want to read full-text journal articles, but unless they are associated with a university they usually won't have easy access to journal databases. Research that could be useful to them is often hidden behind a paywall – or seems that way. This is one of the reasons all CREST outputs are open access by default and available via the CREST website: www.crestresearch.ac.uk

This note summarises ways in which it is possible to access other full text journal articles for free (legally). It focuses on behavioural and social sciences, and the humanities (although is relevant to most disciplines).

DO YOU ALREADY HAVE ACCESS?

CHECK YOUR ALUMNI BENEFITS

If you are a graduate, check your alumni benefits. Sometimes universities offer their alumni access to their physical libraries, some offer access to electronic journal databases whilst you are physically in the library (via their wifi), some also offer remote online access.

CHECK YOUR LOCAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Explore whether you can apply for a reader's card for your local university library. There may be a charge for the card but you may get access to all their electronic journal databases whilst you are physically in the library via the library's wifi.

USE PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Membership of professional bodies often brings free access to journal libraries as well as subscription to other databases at reduced cost. British Psychological Society membership, for instance, gives you access to BPS/Wiley journal collection and EBSCO's Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection. American Psychological Association members can subscribe to PsycArticles, a full text database of 80+ high impact journals.

USE ONLINE RESOURCES

An increasing number of articles are available in full text format online. Sometimes they will be the final version, other times they will be the author's "pre-publication" version. In the latter case this is not the final published version of the paper, but the final version before it is formally published. There may be minor changes between the pre-pub and the published versions, but they are unlikely to be substantive.

CHECK THE JOURNAL WEBSITE

Some journals are open access by default (e.g., *PlosOne*, *Perspectives in Terrorism*). Be cautious – there are plenty of 'vanity publishing' open access journals which don't have high standards of peer review, and which are therefore of dubious quality.

Collections of reputable open access journals can be found via Directory of Open Access Journals: http://www.doaj.org/

Many other journals will publish an article as open access if authors pay the journal to do so. This is becoming more common, particularly in the UK since the Research Councils adopted a policy of mandatory open access for research that they fund.

Some journals release articles as open-access after a fixed period of time, as well as running time-limited special promotions where they allow all or a set of articles to be downloaded for free. Subscribe to publishers' alert services to be notified.

GOOGLE IS YOUR (BEST) FRIEND

It's worth searching Google Scholar (www.scholar.google.com) before trying other methods. Google Scholar covers books, journals, and 'grey' literature[1] and is currently regarded as the most inclusive international scholarly database.

If you know the article you want: Paste the title straight into the search box (put some or all of the title in double quotes for a more efficient search). The results will often show whether the article has a full text version available and clicking on the "*n* versions available" link will confirm whether there is a full text available.

Literature reviews and topic searches: Google Scholar is also good for searching for what's out there on a particular topic. However, you can quickly become overwhelmed with results if you don't narrow your search a bit. Tips for more efficient searching:

- Use "intitle:" to search for specific words in the title of the article e.g. "intitle:radicalization"

- Use "author:" to search for an author by name, e.g., "author:jones p" searches for an author with the last name Jones, and the initial P

- Use the options on the left to narrow the search range by date

- Use Advanced Search (drop down from the arrow on the far right) to narrow your search even further.

It's sometimes worth trying Google web as well, searching for the title in double quotes.

CHECK OTHER SOURCES

Authors' websites – most academics have a profile on their institutional website and some have their own web pages. This is where you may find their pre-pub articles. Alternatively, you can try emailing the author directly for a copy of their article.

ResearchGate - www.researchgate.net A social network for researchers. Many leading scholars are members and often upload full text copies of their publications. To register you need an ".ac.uk" address (this may be available through your alumni association). You don't need to be registered to browse and download publications. The advantage of registering is that you can follow academics and be notified when someone you follow uploads new publications.

Academia.edu – www.academia.edu Another social network for academics. Despite the.edu domain, it is a commercial operation. Like Researchgate, academics upload their full text (often pre-pub) articles to their profiles. Anyone can create an account. Although you have to be logged in to download articles you can read them online without logging in. They don't make this obvious from their homepage though. The "papers" link in the footer will take you to https://www.academia.edu/Directory/Papers and a search box. To read a paper without logging in you must scroll down (if you click on the paper you'll be asked to register).

Institutional repositories – many universities run their own archives, although full text downloads are often restricted to university members. Google the name of the author's university and "institutional repository" to find them.

---

1 Research, analysis, and information that is produced and published by government, academics, business, charities and industry (and not published or controlled by commercial - including academic - publishers).