**Responses to question of how to manage alumni access to databases April 1, 2016**

1. We don’t do this much in my current position, but at my previous institution we arranged some of these subscriptions.  Most of my comments pertain to your second question.  We opted to let the Alumni Office manage the retention and/or distribution of access details and marketing.  The reason for that was that alumni did not have network access to be IP authenticated from their remote locations, so a username and password had to be shared via email or phone, and the existence of the databases could be mentioned in an alumni newsletter.  Although we had the login information in the library, it was more effective for the Alumni Office to work directly with alumni since they actually had specific records about who our alumni were, whereas in the library we had no effective way to know that the caller was actually a graduate. Regarding your first question, I know that some libraries do create a special page, but I think we simply had a note somewhere in case alumni were trying to access our full database list, and we wanted to let them know that there were a few options for them.  I suppose my preference would be an informative LibGuide that spelled out all of the services available to alumni, but clearly multiple solutions can work. Since we had limited resources available to alumni, they were largely paid from library funds or included as part of other library subscriptions.  I don’t believe that our library would have had the option to invest in additional resources of this type since we struggled to afford even our current subscriptions for enrolled students, but I would hope we would always offer our expertise even if other departments covered the expenses. I hope something in there helped, and it is great to see that you’re in a position to offer these types of resources to former students.

Chris Vidas

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2. Good luck with expanding your current licenses. Vendors don’t usually want to accommodate this or it can get very pricy, even with proper authentication in place.

Some vendors, like Ebsco, have sep products that you can license for alums.

See: <https://www.ebsco.com/news-center/press-releases/ebsco-releases-new-resources-for-alumni>

[Academic Search Alumni Edition | Graduate ... - Ebsco](https://www.ebscohost.com/academic/academic-search-alumni-edition)

EBSCO's Alumni Resources Research Database

[Business Source Alumni Edition - Ebsco](https://www.ebscohost.com/academic/business-source-alumni-edition)

If you can get the MBA alum office to pay for it, it may be worth it

We’re an academic health sciences library whose alums often ask about remote access…We try to put a positive spin on what they have access to (free) and what services we can still offer them as alums.

See:

<http://galter.northwestern.edu/about-us/alumni>

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3. In case readers might be interested in the experience of a library that does not provide alumni access even in instances when the license allows it to do without any additional charge, I want to share the information on the challenges that UNC faced and has not been able to resolve.

* o
* Does the university or library have a mechanism that would allow alumni to authenticate using its current sign-on system as opposed to current faculty, students, and staff?
* o
* Does the institution’s identity system keep track of alumni credentials in a way that would effectively allow them to access only a sub-set of alumni-specific products but not all the other library resources?
* o
* Because answers to the above typically are negative, libraries would need to provide alumni access via the local alumni association that results in other challenges.
  + o
  + Alumni association’s website/authentication systems often cannot provide adequate protection to satisfy publishers and aggregators that offer alumni access.
  + o
  + Contract legal language often limits access to *only* valid alumni:  that is, former students who have matriculated.  Additionally, as a rule publishers and vendors explicitly have indicated in some instances that alumni access cannot be extended to all members of the local alumni association.
  + o
  + Neither the library nor probably the parent institution’s legal office would violate these contractual terms explicitly.
  + o
  + Politically the library could/would not allow nor much less financially contribute to the cost of alumni access for e-resources that would be limited to only active members of the local alumni association.
  + o
  + Politically and practically the alumni association could/would not limit access to e-resources only to those who actually have graduated from the institution:  that is, alumni access to library resources would have to be part of the standard benefits of for all members joining the alumni association whether or not they ever attended the institution—much less graduated.  Otherwise, the association would create a two-tiered membership of “real” versus “fake” alumni.
  + o
  + As a matter of policy, the alumni association would not extend its benefits to non-members—especially since doing so would remove the incentives to become a paid member.

I would be interested in learning how other libraries have addressed these concerns.

Luke Swindler

4. Luke raises important issues. To answer Erin’s original question first, yes, we provide alumni access but at the moment, only for a single database (ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials). The effort to set this up was very considerable and took me months of persistent experimentation and/or nagging or just pigheadedness to get it to work properly. That was mostly due to local issues working with EZProxy and our campus authentication system, which happened to change midpoint through my effort.

But now that it is in place, it seems to work well as far as I can see, and I’d describe this service as a huge hit for our worldwide alumni. Personally, I’d be in favor of expanding this service to other licensed content, but with limited budget, there is always a tension between providing the most we can for current people vs. serving alumni. I’ve heard from people from all over the globe who’ve used this access. The only downside has been that they then tend to expect access to everything else, not just ATLA. Although our library director approached our alumni association initially to see if they might be interested in funding this access, the response was negative, so we decided to fund this ourselves. I cannot overstate how important it was to figure out some of the things that Luke highlights such as ensuring that authentication works properly with existing campus authentication. It turned out that alumni had a separate alumni login account administered by the alumni association and that caused a lot of confusion to alumni who wanted to use this database. Unfortunately, there isn’t a single sign on kind of setup and so we fielded a lot of questions about the fact that no, you can’t use your alumni account credentials, you need campus credentials. Thankfully our IT area readily set up instructions for how alumni could obtain these credentials and they fielded the vast majority of calls and emails via their campus helpdesk. To address other questions…Yes, we created a separate webpage on our site to which we pointed alumni. If you go to library.wheaton.edu and click on the Services tab, the first link is for Alumni, and you can see the page to which I refer. We created a separate EZProxy instance just for authenticating alumni and used the Groups functionality within EZProxy to control things so that alumni can get to ATLA but not to anything else.

If more detail is needed, let me know, but I hope this helps.

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5. This topic has been raised on our campus before.  We only have a couple of resources that would allow alumni access without having an additional charge.  We get access to a couple of alumni versions of EBSCO databases as part of a SUNY-system wide package.  For these two, the Alumni Association handles access.  The databases will work with individual usernames and passwords, and the Alumni Association will give those out to members.  The Libraries aren’t really involved. Our package with Annual Reviews will also allow alumni access, but it’s got to be IP authenticated in the same manner as our regular users.  Alumni are not maintained in our university system, so we have no way to provide it.

We have gotten requests from alums for remote access to specific databases, with business being one subject of interest.  People have also asked about us providing JSTOR access. JSTOR will allow this for about 10% of your subscription costs, last time I checked.   We just don’t have funding for that and have had to politely explain that it’s not possible.

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6. We provide alumni access to a subset of our resources. Our alumni office was thrilled when we got this set up a few years ago. Here’s our list: <http://library.unbc.ca/using-library/circulation/alumni-electronic-resources> Systems: We are using III’s Sierra for an ILS and EZProxy for off-campus authentication.

Authentication: Users authenticate via LDAP and/or their library barcode. They have a designated ptype of alumni in both Sierra and the LDAP database. We use groups in EZProxy to control access. Alumni have access to ONLY the resources identified for their use, and other users have access to both the alumni resources and the rest of our authenticated resources (which we identify as “Group Default”). Alumni library accounts expire every year, and they must contact the library if they want continued access. The alumni designation is available to former UNBC students only.

Identifying resources: The majority of our alumni-accessible resources are consortia resources where the consortium has negotiated for alumni access. Others are ones with permissive “Authorized Users” definitions in the licenses. As such, this comes at no additional cost to us. I don’t believe we have actively pushed for alumni access when negotiating directly with a vendor – as far as I am aware, we ask for alumni access rights and if they refuse, we carry on negotiating the license for our current users (faculty, staff, students; we try to get walk-in access when we can as well). As far as workflow considerations, there are only three: identifying “alumni” as an authorized user in the license record; adding the resource to the correct config section in EZProxy (and checking for any conflicts with the Group Default resources); and manually updating the list on the website. The only problem we have encountered is multi-collection platforms that have separate licenses for separate resources/collections. For example, we have alumni access to Forest science from Ovid, but not to any other Ovid resources such as LWW; as such, we have not enabled alumni access to Forest science. This is a limitation of using a single EZProxy instance for both groups. As we are essentially providing a free “bonus” service to our alumni without additional funding, we will not be setting up a separate EZProxy server to remedy this. Hope this helps!

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