

Considerations for Multi-College Access

The latest development to the RA system, launched 6 March 2018, enables users who have valid credentials at multiple colleges to easily access all of the resources they are entitled to.

The User Experience

Imagine Nia, a full-time student in a diploma program at Centennial who, over the summer break, is taking a continuing ed. course online from Sault. After spending the morning watching a movie accessed from Centennial's library website, Nia decides to do some homework for her online course, so she heads over to Sault's library website and clicks on a link to one of their resources.

Because she's currently logged into Centennial's RA, and is now trying to access one of Sault's resources, Nia will need to log into Sault's RA instead. The first thing she'll encounter is an error code 9 screen:

An error has occurred while processing your request.

ERROR MESSAGE (code 9) - Please Log in to Authorized College

You have requested <https://birdsna.org/> from **Sault College**.

You are currently logged in as a **Centennial** user.

This resource belongs to another college for which you need to supply additional credentials. Click the button below to log in as a **Sault College** user.

(Note that clicking the button below may also log you out of Centennial's system. If you require simultaneous access to the resources of more than one college, please use a different browser for each college.)

Please click [here](#) to return to the previous page.

When she clicks "Login," Sault's RA login screen will load, and once she logs in she'll be redirected to Sault's resource.

As noted in the error message, by logging into Sault, Nia is for the most part logging out of Centennial. To be exact: if she has a Centennial resource open in another browser tab, she may still be able to use it; however, she will not be able to open any new Centennial resources, nor re-open the resource she was previously in if she happens to close that browser tab or navigate away from it, without going back through the code 9 process (i.e. logging out of Sault and back into Centennial).

Therefore, if a user – for example, an askON staff member – needs concurrent access to resources from multiple colleges, then we recommend using a different browser for each college.

Dependencies: What the Library Needs to Know

The institutional code is now a **required** part of the RA prefix.

`http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?inst=sault&url=https://birdsna.org/`

The diagram shows the URL `http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?inst=sault&url=https://birdsna.org/` with three brackets below it. A large black bracket underlines the entire URL and is labeled "RA prefix". A smaller orange bracket underlines the parameter `?inst=sault` and is labeled "Institutional code". A purple bracket underlines the parameter `&url=https://birdsna.org/` and is labeled "Vendor URL".

(To explain why: When Nia clicked on Sault’s link, the RA system saw Sault’s institutional code in the URL and therefore knew to present her with the option to log in as a Sault user; otherwise, it would have simply redirected her to Sault’s resource as a Centennial user, and the vendor’s website would have denied her access because Sault’s resource is not licensed for Centennial.)

If you are not currently using the institutional code in your URLs, you are encouraged to update your URLs as soon as possible.

Workarounds for Permalinks

Some platforms allow library administrators to register their proxy server prefix so that permalinks generated by their users include their proxy server prefix. In these cases, the permalink will function just as your other links do.

Most platforms, however, do not include this feature, and permalinks to these resources therefore do not include your institutional code.

For example, here is a permalink to the article on the Ivory Gull in *Birds of North America* – and it looks exactly the same for all subscribers of that resource who participate in the RA service:

`https://birdsna-org.eztest.ocls.ca/Species-Account/bna/species/ivogul/introduction`

If a user is logged into a college’s RA, and uses another college’s permalink that does not include the proxy server prefix, then the RA system will not know to present them with the code 9 error screen and will instead redirect them to the vendor’s resource, which will recognize them only as a user of the college whose RA they’re logged into.

The user in this case has a few different options for how to proceed:

- Clear their browser’s cache before clicking on the permalink. (This will log them out of the first college entirely.)
- Use a completely different browser for accessing the permalink. (This will allow them to use the resources of both colleges concurrently.)

In both cases described above, the permalink will first load the college selection screen (“Which college do you attend?”), before loading the college’s RA login page. This behaviour is the same as if they had never logged into any other college in the first place. (It’s also the same as what would have happened prior to this recent RA development.)

Alternatively, the user has a third option:

- Access the landing page of the resource from the second college (that is, use a URL that includes the proxy server prefix, e.g. from the college’s library website), and browse/search for the desired article. (This will send them through the code 9 error process.)