



# REMOTE ACCESS

## A SERVICE GUIDE FOR COLLEGES

An overview of the opt-in Remote Access service provided by Ontario College Library Service



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## Remote Access Basics

### 1. What is the Remote Access service?

Remote Access (RA) is a technical service that allows off-campus users to access licensed electronic resources and databases using their college or library-issued credentials.

RA uses an EZproxy server that “authenticates remote Internet-based users and makes them appear to be local to the library’s network.”<sup>1</sup> EZproxy acts as an intermediary between users and the licensed databases to which each college subscribes. If the service is configured correctly, users should only have to sign in once; after this, the EZproxy server recognizes the user’s IP address via a cookie placed in the user’s browser.

Using a combination of web server applications, Remote Access validates college library patrons wishing to access an electronic resource. Profiling functions keep track of each college and the databases to which that college subscribes. This ensures against any unintentional database licence violations.

Through the profiling features, colleges can personalize the RA user interface for their students, and block certain users if required.

Remote Access is an opt-in service provided by the Ontario College Library Service (OCLS).

### 2. How does Remote Access work?

1. When off-campus users click on a link for an electronic resource or database, they are redirected to the Remote Access page, which validates their identity based on their college’s authentication credentials (e.g. signing in with a student ID and password).
2. Users are seamlessly redirected to the electronic resource via the EZproxy server. Since this step happens behind the scenes on the server end of the Remote Access process, most users won’t even realize they have been redirected.
3. The EZproxy server re-writes or modifies the URL of the resource users are trying to access; **.rap** will appear as part of the URL when users are accessing a resource via the EZproxy server.

*What is Remote Access?*



*Remote Access (RA) is a technical service that allows off-campus users to access licensed electronic resources and databases using their college or library-issued credentials*



<sup>1</sup> <http://www5.oclc.org/downloads/tutorials/ezproxy/default.htm>



## All About URLs

### 3. What is the Remote Access URL prefix and how does it work with the vendor/product URL?

The RA URL prefix ([ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=](http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=)) ensures that off-campus requests for a particular product, e.g. a database or other resource, go through the Remote Access process. The vendor or product URL identifies which resource the user is trying to access.

It is important to note that without the inclusion of the RA prefix, the request will not go through the Remote Access process, and off-campus users will not be able to access the resource. Therefore, this URL prefix must be added to any resources that will be accessed off campus. The RA prefix must also be used for resources that require users to log-in regardless of whether they're on or off campus. See **Question 4** for more information on this topic.

The RA prefix changes slightly before and after the request to access an resource has been received by the EZproxy server. The [http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=\[vendor url\]\\*](http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=[vendor url]*) appears prior to authentication, while [http://\[vendor url\].rap.ocls.ca/](http://[vendor url].rap.ocls.ca/) appears after the request has passed through the RA process and the user has been authenticated.

Understanding the [components of a URL](#) may help clarify this process.

### 4. How do I create the URL for products where the vendor requires all users to enter their log-in credentials whether they're on campus or off campus?

1. Copy the URL of the resource you want to link to. It must include the RA prefix. For example,  
[http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/ko\\_acd\\_cec?db=AONE](http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/ko_acd_cec?db=AONE)
2. Using Notepad or a word processor, paste the URL.
3. Type `noipcheck=true&` between the `?` and the `url=` in the RA prefix. For example,  
[http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?noipcheck=true&url=http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/ko\\_acd\\_cec?db=AONE](http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?noipcheck=true&url=http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/ko_acd_cec?db=AONE)
4. Using this complete URL, follow the usual process for posting links to your website.

*The RA prefix must be added to any resource that will be accessed off-campus. See the Appendix for a helpful URL infographic*



\*Algonquin has a slightly different RA prefix, e.g. [http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/algologin.aspx?url=\[vendor URL\]](http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/algologin.aspx?url=[vendor URL])

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### 5. How can I configure Remote Access so users see our college's RA page rather than a generic page with a drop-down list of colleges?

In order for users to see your college's Remote Access page, you must include the additional `inst=[CollegeName]` piece in the RA URL for each resource.

For example, in this URL <http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=http://search.proquest.com/>, users will see the drop down menu and have to select their college on the Remote Access page.

However, in the following URL

<http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?inst=humber&url=http://search.proquest.com/>, the college name has been added, which means that users from Humber will see their own Remote Access page. They will not need to take the additional step of selecting their college:

Every college has a specific name to include in `[CollegeName]`. In most instances, it is the actual name of the college, but there are several exceptions. Check this list if you're not sure:

College Name	inst=
Algonquin*	algonquin
Boréal	boreal
Canadore	canadore
Centennial	centennial
Conestoga	conestoga
Confederation	confederation
Fleming	fleming
George Brown	gb
Georgian	georgian
Humber	humber
La Cité	lacite
Lambton	lambton
Loyalist	loyalist
Northern	northern
Sault	sault
St. Clair	stclair
St. Lawrence	stlawrence

\* Algonquin has a slightly different prefix, e.g. <http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/algologin.aspx?inst=algonquin>

## Adding New eResource Products

### 6. How are new products added to a college's RA profile?

New products purchased through OCLS are added to a college's RA profile once the subscription has been confirmed.

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If the product was not purchased through OCLS, you need to submit a ticket to OCLS via the Request Tracker (RT) system. The ticket should include the name of the product and the vendor URL, and you should select the Remote Access queue when creating the ticket. Learn more about [submitting RT tickets](#).

### 7. What other steps do I need to take to ensure off-campus users can access a new eresource product?

You will need to add the URL of the product, complete with the RA prefix, to your college's website so that users can access the resource both on and off campus.

As well, if you did not purchase the product through OCLS and the product uses IP authentication to verify user accounts, then you will need to send the vendor your proxy IP address for off-campus access and your other IP addresses for on-campus access.

### 8. How can I find my college's proxy IP address?

Check the OCLS website for a list of the [colleges' proxy IP addresses](#).

## Testing Remote Access

### 9. How can I check to see if RA is working for a specific resource?

1. Copy the URL of the resource you want to test. It must include the RA prefix. For example, [http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/ko\\_acd\\_cec?db=AONE](http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/ko_acd_cec?db=AONE)
2. Paste the URL into a web browser but don't hit Enter.
3. Type `noipcheck=true&` between the `?` and the `url=` of the RA prefix. For example, [http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?noipcheck=true&url=http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/ko\\_acd\\_cec?db=AONE](http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?noipcheck=true&url=http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itweb/ko_acd_cec?db=AONE)
4. Hit Enter.
5. RA will not check the college's IP addresses against the known on-site IPs, so you will be able to test the resource as if you are coming from off campus. You will be directed to the RA log-in screen and will need to follow the same steps as an off-campus user to ensure that there are no vendor-side issues.

*Have a Remote Access issue that's not covered here? Submit a Request Tracker ticket to the Remote Access queue. Include the name of the vendor and the product URL in your ticket*





### 10. Off-campus users are having trouble accessing a link to a journal article. What may be causing this?

Although there are numerous reasons why users may be experiencing issues, the first step is to check whether the URL the users are clicking includes the RA prefix. All links to articles, databases, videos, etc. must include the RA prefix. The link must also be a stable or permanent link; see **Question 11** for more information about stable links.

If the link does include the RA prefix, then [submit a ticket](#) to OCLS via Request Tracker (RT) for assistance troubleshooting this issue.

### 11. What is a persistent/permanent/stable link?

When searching for and connecting to a database, ebook, online journal or article, the URL that appears in your browser may be a temporary address that might not function several days or even a few hours later.

Most library resources offer built-in tools to help you easily create stable links which, when combined with the RA prefix, will work both on and off campus.

For more general information about creating stable links, take a look at [this guide from Georgian College](#).

## *Features and Customization*

### 12. Can the Remote Access log-in page be customized, for instance with library contact information and hours?

Yes, it can be customized, although there is some cost involved to do this. Please contact OCLS for more details by submitting a [Request Tracker ticket](#).

### 13. How can I see which databases are included in our RA profile?

The easiest way to do this is to check your college's website for a list of resources. If this is difficult to access or compile, you can [submit a RT ticket](#) and OCLS can generate the list.

### 14. How can I access stats about my RA service usage?

[Submit a ticket](#) to OCLS via the Request Tracker (RT) system to access this information.



### 15. How are students added to the Remote Access system? Can this happen in real-time?

This is a standard batch process that happens via FTP between a college and OCLS; this process occurs for many services, not just RA. To increase the frequency of adding students, you would need to increase the frequency with which the patron file is provided by your college.

Running the batch process twice a day is ideal. If you would like to change the frequency of the process, please contact OCLS by [submitting a ticket](#) to the Remote Access queue in Request Tracker. For adding students in real-time, a Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) server is required.

## *Appendix*

Please note that the following infographics are also available as JPEGs and PDFs on the Remote Access Resource page.

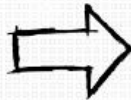




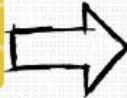
# How Remote Access Works



An off-campus user wants to access a database to which your college subscribes



The request to access the subscription-only database is intercepted by the firewall



The user is routed to the Remote Access log-in page where they enter their log-in credentials such as student number and password



The requested webpage is returned to the user and authenticated access is provided.



## What's happening behind the scenes...



The EZproxy server allows access to the requested database



The EZproxy server checks that the log-in information is correct; if it is, the user is authenticated



EZproxy Server



# Know your URLs

## The RA prefix & vendor URL

<http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?url=http://search.proquest.com/>

This tells the server that the request to access the resource needs to be authenticated via Remote Access

This is the vendor URL; where the resource is located on the Internet

## RA prefix & vendor URL plus the institution

<http://ra.ocls.ca/ra/login.aspx?inst=humber&url=http://search.proquest.com/>

*Tip: not all colleges use their complete institution name here. Check the FAQ for yours*

This specifies which college the request belongs to. Having this piece in your resource URLs means that users don't need to select their college on the RA log-in page

## After authentication

<http://search.proquest.com.rap.ocls.ca>

The "rap.ocls.ca" signals that the request has been routed through the EZproxy server and that Remote Access is working







# Is Remote Access working for your eresource?



Test it in a few easy steps!



## STEP TWO

Paste the URL into a web browser but DON'T hit enter.

## STEP ONE

Copy the URL of the eresource you want to test. Make sure it contains the RA prefix.

`HTTP://RA.OCLS.CA/RA/LOGIN.ASPX?URL=HTTP://INFOTRAC.GALEGROUP.COM/ITWEB/KO_ACD_CEC?DB=AONE`

## STEP THREE

Type `noipcheck=true&` between the ? and the `url=` in the RA prefix.

`HTTP://RA.OCLS.CA/RA/LOGIN.ASPX?NOIPCHECK=TRUE&URL=HTTP://INFOTRAC.GALEGROUP.COM/ITWEB/KO_ACD_CEC?DB=AONE`



## STEP FOUR

Hit enter! If RA is working for this resource, you will be directed to Remote Access log-in page.



## STEP FIVE

Sign into Remote Access to ensure that everything is working correctly on the vendor side.

Following these steps, you are masking the IP address so you can test the resources as an off-campus user.

