Library Access and Paywalls for Newspapers & Magazines

[Originally written by Alexa Pearce, Shevon Desai and Scott Dennis, 01/21/2014. Last updated 02/02/2017.]

Background

The U-M Library maintains vast print and digital subscriptions to newspapers and magazines, through library subscriptions to individual publications, and via aggregator database services on vendor platforms such as ProQuest, EBSCOhost, LexisNexis Academic, and several others.

Many newspapers and magazines produce varying print and web editions. For example, the Wall Street Journal has long published a portion of its articles exclusively on WSJ.com. Other publications, such as The New Yorker, maintain blogs that are not reproduced in print. Major newspapers, such as the New York Times, increasingly produce journalism in video and data visualizations that cannot be reproduced in their print editions.

The goal of the library is always to subscribe to the entirety of a given publication, incorporating all print and web-only content into its paid, licensed access, on behalf of its user community. Many of our aggregator services denote the varying print and web editions that they include. However, it is not uncommon for individual publishers to exclude their web-only content from these aggregator services or from direct library subscriptions. This content frequently sits behind paywalls on newspaper or magazine websites that permit access only to individual subscribers.

Here are recommendations for what to do when you hit one of these paywalls:

1. **Double check the nature of the library’s subscription.** Look up the title of the newspaper or magazine in the Mirlyn catalog and closely examine our holdings statements, especially for electronic resources. It is common for the library to have access to a single publication on multiple platforms, but the coverage, in terms of dates and editions, may vary between platforms.
2. Double check the coverage that our aggregator services provide. For example, if you do a Publication Search for “Wall Street Journal” in ProQuest, you will see that the online edition is listed separately from the print edition. Both are covered, but ProQuest treats them like separate publications.
In LexisNexis Academic, you can search within the Sources menu. If you search for “New York Times,” for example, you will see that NYT blogs are treated like a separate publication.

3. Do a search in ArticlesPlus for the title and author of the article you are trying to read. The library’s ArticlesPlus service provides single-search, combined access to most of the online newspaper and magazine content licensed by the library, including all that’s included in ProQuest and LexisNexis Academic.
What you can do if the steps listed above don’t work:

If you can’t find the article or other content you are seeking on any aggregator platform or via ArticlesPlus, it has likely been excluded from library subscriptions. Things you can do:

**Ask a Librarian.** It never hurts to get a second set of eyes. Librarians can help determine whether the content you are seeking is already accessible locally, and if it isn’t, whether you might be able to obtain it via Interlibrary Loan.

**Change your search criteria.** Sometimes articles have different titles, bylines, and date lines in print and online. Try to search by keyword or with a phrase from the article text, if available, to see if it comes up under another description.

**Explore the nature of the paywall.** Some paywalls are iron-clad and others are deliberately porous in nature. For example, NYTimes.com allows non-subscribers to access up to 10 items (articles, videos, etc.) per month via regular web browsing, and provides unlimited access to all items via a NYT Twitter feed as they are published.

**Look for educational discounts.** If you decide that you want to purchase a personal subscription to a newspaper or magazine, you may be able to get a discount if you are currently affiliated with an educational institution like University of Michigan. Some publishers offer students and faculty discounts of 50% or more off their regular subscription rates for individuals. Look on the publication’s website or contact them directly for more information.