

Library Makes Available Online Information

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Abstract

A major part of a modern Library's collection of information resources consists of an ever-expanding range of online/electronic information resources such as special subject databases, full-text electronic journals and Web sites/subject gateways. This article describes the many online/electronic resources made available to authorized users of the University of the West Indies St. Augustine Campus Libraries.

Introduction

A major part of the Library's collection of information resources consists of an ever-expanding range of online/electronic information resources such as special subject databases, full-text electronic journals and Web sites/subject gateways. Some of these online/electronic resources like online databases and e-journals have been subscribed to and licensed for The University of The West Indies, St. Augustine. They are not available via popular Internet search engines like Yahoo or Google. Moreover, these online/electronic resources are free to all registered students of the UWI. St. Augustine.

Subject/Reference librarians at the Main Library are trained to help students sort through this wide array of available information resources. Students can connect with Subject/Reference Librarians via the Library's website <http://www.mainlib.uwi.tt> which lists the necessary contact details (names; telephone numbers; and e-mail addresses).

Access

Students can access the Library's online information resources via the various computing facilities available on campus. These facilities include the Main Library's computing services: the St. Augustine Research and Reference Service (STARRS) which also offers 24/7 computing facilities during the semesters) and the User Education Centre (UEC).

Information Gateway

The Library's website serves as an electronic welcome mat to its wide range of online resources. The website is also a source of practical information regarding library services (i.e. services, service hours and contact information). Available 24 hours a day via the Internet, the website is an online information gateway to a wealth of Library resources and services. Links via the Library's website facilitate access to the research resources listed below.

Library Catalogue

The Library's catalogue is available for online searching via the Online Public Access Catalogue or OPAC. By using the OPAC, students can perform several functions such as:

- * locating library materials (by searching under author/title/subject/keyword)
- * locating booklist material (by searching the instructor's name/course code)
- * identifying whether materials have been checked out or not
- * checking to see requests/loans
- * checking to see owed fines.

Electronic Resources

The E-resources Finder link on the Library's website provides access to some essential research resources. Some of these resources (denoted by an asterisk) can be accessed off-campus via the Internet. Others due to license agreements with information vendors are only accessible from within the St. Augustine campus.

Subject Resource Gateway

To facilitate users, The Main Library has created a 'one-stop-shop' approach to its electronic information resources within each subject area. Relevant electronic resources such as databases, Internet sites, or electronic journals are grouped according to subject.

Students can look for items of interest by browsing or searching the lists of all these resources via the Internet.

Academic & Research Databases

The Main Library subscribes to a large number of online research databases that contain indexes to journal articles and full text collections of materials such as newspapers, journals, statistical publications, and encyclopaedias. These databases are a valuable source of research information because they:

- * offer a quick and efficient way to survey the literature of a particular subject area
- * have been specifically chosen to support taught subject areas
- * provide access to accurate and reliable information that is quality checked by academics and/or professionals

Students can explore/use these databases with the help of:

- * the Library's online database tutorial
- * user guides
- * a listing and content description of all the databases
- * a subject listing with links to the databases
- * personalised assistance from Subject/Reference Librarians

According to their subject area, students have a variety of databases to choose from including:

- * Agriculture & Natural Sciences: Agri200; Agris/Caris; Agricola; Biological Abstracts; Cab Abstracts; Food Science & Technology Abstracts; Oclc First Search; Tropag Rural; Unesco Eolss.
- * Engineering & Physical Sciences: Ebscohost; Ei Village 2; Emerald Fulltext; Oclc First Search; Petroleum Abstracts Discovery; Science Direct Web Editions; Scifinder Scholar; Spe E-Library.
- * Humanities/Education: Ebscohost; Education Fulltext; Oclc Firstsearch; Proquest.
- * Social Sciences: Emerald Fulltext; Oclc Firstsearch; Proquest.
- * Multidisciplinary: Ebscohost; Oclc Firstsearch; Proquest.
- * West Indian: Carindex; Trinidad & Tobago Gazette.

Postgraduate students also have access to essential research databases:

- * Dissertation Abstracts (via OCLC FirstSearch) which covers dissertations and theses from institutions in North America and Europe from 1861 to present, with abstracts from 1980
- * Index to Theses which lists theses with abstracts accepted for higher degrees by universities in Great Britain and Ireland since 1716
- * CRL Foreign Doctoral Dissertations which contains approximately 20,000 foreign doctoral dissertations

Electronic Journals

Electronic or e-journals are serial publications that are available in digital format. The Main Library provides access to hundreds of e-journals in most subject areas. For example, a small selection of the e-journals available in the Humanities & Education subject area includes:

- * British Journal of Educational Technology
- * Issues in Educational Research
- * Journal of African History
- * Journal of Arabic & Islamic Studies
- * World Literature Today

Reference Works

The Main Library also provides online access to basic Reference Works. A small sample of the available online Reference Works includes:

- * Britannica Online
- * Cambridge Dictionaries Online
- * Caribbean Newspapers
- * Central Statistical Office of Trinidad & Tobago
- * CIA World Fact Book
- * Global Statistics
- * Guinness World Records
- * Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online

Selected Websites & Subject Gateways

The World Wide Web offers countless free online resources. However, many of these resources contain poor quality content or outdated information. Moreover, the growth and volume of Web information makes it more difficult and slower to locate specific content.

To save students time and effort spent on lengthy Web surfing and to enable quality and relevant choices, Subject/Reference librarians at the Main Library select, evaluate and create organized lists of authoritative Web resources.

For example, students in Engineering and Physical Sciences are provided with a wide choice of carefully selected websites/subject gateways that includes:

- * EEVL, the Internet Guide to Engineering, Mathematics and Computing
- * Efundu: Engineering Fundamentals
- * Greatest Engineering Achievements of the 20th century
- * Free full-text books in Programming and Computer Science
- * iCivilEngineer: The Internet for Civil Engineers

Skills Tutorial

As the above lists of resources demonstrate, students today exist in an environment where information is both plentiful and easily obtained through increasingly sophisticated technology. They do however face a key hurdle: how to manage the increasing quantity and complexity of information in their subject discipline.

Recognising that many students in general need guidance on how to exploit effectively and productively the wide array of available resources, the Main Library has developed an Information Literacy Programme in the form of an online skills' tutorial. Comprising seven stand alone modules (1-7), the tutorial assists students to find, use and evaluate information effectively:

1. Computer literacy
2. Basic research skills
3. Using the OPAC
4. The Internet as a Research Tool
5. West Indiana and Special Collections
6. Online databases
7. Managing references

This tutorial is also available via WebCT at <http://www.sta.uwi.edu/>. Its stand-alone nature allows students to explore the tutorial at their own convenience and pace.

Examination Papers

The Main Library has made most (Semester 1, 1998 to present) of the examination papers of the UWI, St. Augustine available online. The papers are in Portable Document Format (PDF), which allows students to view the document on screen, save it to disk, or print it. Students can retrieve a particular exam paper by searching under course codes; course titles; years; or by semesters.

Thesis Guide

This resource is a digitized version of the UWI's guide for the preparation of theses and research papers. Its PDF format allows students to view the document on screen, save it to disk, or print it.

Digital Collections

These research resources comprise digital replicas of portions of two of the major collections in the Main Library's West Indiana & Special Collections:

- * The Colonial Bank Correspondence, 1837-1885
- * Diaries of Sir William Young, the Governor of Tobago, 1807-1815

Virtual Displays

An online exhibition provided by the Main Library commemorates the twentieth anniversary of Sir Solomon Hochoy, the Governor General of Trinidad and Tobago from 1962-1972. It features digitized images of Sir Solomon and Lady Hochoy.

Online/electronic information resources now available to registered students at the UWI St. Augustine are daily increasing and are wide and varied. The Main Library's 24/7 service also facilitates students after regular library hours to gain full access to all of the above mentioned resources. Students can now take full advantage of the new learning opportunities and choices made available to them.