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A quicker route to electronic full text

Look for the little purple button that is now appearing in many Northwestern University Library electronic resources.



This feature comes to Northwestern from a company called Ex Libris and is called SFX (an acronym for “special effects”). SFX software allows the researcher to find the full text of an article if it exists in Northwestern University Library’s electronic environment regardless of where that article is located.

In order to identify article citations and then find the electronic full text of the articles, until recently researchers may have had to search multiple databases or search a database and then follow it up with a search in NUcat. SFX software, through a technology known as OpenURL, allows the researcher to search within one database, retrieve relevant article citations, and then, if there is no full text available within that particular database, link across to another database or provider of the electronic full text by clicking on “Find it @ NU.”

In the example below, a search is conducted in the database *America: History and Life*. An article citation of interest is selected.


Type: Article

Author: Hansell, William H., Jr.

Title: A COMMON VISION FOR THE FUTURE: THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS IN THE **DEMOCRATIC PROCESS**.

Citation: National Civic Review 1996 85(3): 5-13.

 [\[Help \]](#)

ISSN: 0027-9013 

The researcher is taken to the menu directly below, which lists two full-text options as well as links to bibliographic management software and a link to the Reference Department’s Answers Online service for further help.

Title A COMMON VISION FOR THE FUTURE: THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.
Source National civic review [0027-9013] yr: 1996 vol: 85 iss: 3 pg: 5

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Then, the desired end result...the full-text article.

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Title: A COMMON VISION FOR THE FUTURE: THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS , By: Hansell Jr., William H., National Civic Review, 0027-9013, September 1, 1996, Vol. 85, Issue 3
Database: Academic Search Elite

A COMMON VISION FOR THE FUTURE: THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENS IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

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"I know of no safe repository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

-- Thomas Jefferson

Choosing from no more than three full-text options

Also until recently, once researchers had searched the catalog and located electronic full text for a journal that included the volume or issue needed, it could be overwhelming to have to choose the optimal full-text source from a long list of providers available for one article. SFX simplifies the decision-making by narrowing the number of full-text options to no more than the three best providers of full text for a particular article. What constitutes the "top" providers of electronic full text has to do with whether an article can be retrieved through SFX right at the article level, as opposed to linking the researcher just to the journal title or even more cumbersome, just to the database's or provider's front search page. Another factor considered in identifying the best full-text options is the format and quality of full text available.

If electronic full text is not available for an article

If there is no electronic full text, but there is a paper copy of the journal article available, then the menu page of options includes a link to a NUcat record identifying the paper copy. If Northwestern University Library does not have either electronic or paper copies, then a link to Interlibrary Loan appears in the menu page of options. The goal of SFX is to help make the research process as seamless as possible so the researcher may concentrate on actual research as opposed to the mechanics of gathering information. As more content becomes available in electronic format, and as more electronic subscriptions become compatible with SFX software, the value and advantages of such a system will become increasingly clear.

--Jeannette Moss