



Empire State College Alumni Access

by Dana Longley (Empire State College)



Cover Story

In the late Fall of 2007, the [college's](#) alumni office approached the library asking about access to research resources for their growing user population. They had just launched an [online community site](#) and were looking for [additional services](#) to tack on to it as incentives for alumni participation.

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Features

Because access to the large depth of library resources had long been a source of requests from alumni, they asked us to investigate the possibility, for which their office was willing to foot the bill.

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We subscribe to several [ProQuest](#) and EBSCOHost databases, so our director, Suzanne Hayes, contacted them about the possibility of alumni access. Surprisingly, both vendors replied it was possible. As a result we licensed access to Alumni version's of EBSCO Host's [Academic Search](#) & [Business Source Premier](#) products, as well as ProQuest's Research Library and ABI/INFORM Complete. In both cases, I believe the alumni versions ended up with only slightly less material than the regular versions, due to some publishers declining to offer their content in this kind of package. This is only a guess, but perhaps those publishers viewed alumni access as a threat to corporate sales? It was also decided to purchase a separate instance of Serials Solutions A-Z List so that alumni could locate specific journals available to them.



The next (and last) big obstacle to making this happen was authentication. The vendors had legitimate concerns about alumni access to non-alumni content, and existing alumni, up to this point, did not have a college login account. They only had access to the [alumni online community](#), which is a third party login environment and unsuitable for extension to other systems. The decision was made to explore the features of our existing EZProxy server for a solution. Our systems people originally devised a plan to use our existing student account system (which uses Datatel) and the groups feature within the EZProxy configuration file. However, this solution was not sufficient to securely distinguish current students from alumni, so instead a second instance of EZProxy was purchased and alumni accounts were run through that for access.

The program launched in February 2008. Usage of these alumni library resources is tracked using Google Analytics (for hits/click-throughs on the landing page) and vendor usage tools. The alumni coordinator was provided with login access to the Google statistics directly. Vendor statistics are gathered and provided to the alumni office on a bi-annual basis. So far, usage has been low but steady after an initial surge following a wide marketing effort on the part of the alumni office.



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