Authentication options

When an individual accesses one of the Britannica Digital Learning online resources, we must know that they are authorised to do this. There are several different ways of authenticating a user's access, and these are outlined below.

IP Address

Authentication by IP address is a very popular choice as it requires little effort from the Administrator. However, we can only use IP addresses if they are being used solely by the school who has purchased Britannica.

It is very common for an IP address to be shared by a whole Municipality, and in these cases we cannot use IP address as an authentication method as it may allow unauthorised users access to Britannica Online resources. We are able to check if an IP address is unique or shared before we use it to authenticate access.

We are also unable to accept shared IP addresses that are protected by Firewall or Proxy Servers as we cannot see the management of these services and do not know if they have been set up correctly.

It is important to remember that IP address authentication will only validate users that are on site within the institution. This will not give access to them remotely.

Referral URL

When a school or library has secured web pages that are protected by a password, or an Intranet system, we can use the Referral URL system. This can also work for some Learning Platforms.

For this method, the institution will provide the URL for a web page or pages that they would like users to access Britannica from. Once we have checked that these URLs are secure, we will send on the links for Britannica that the Administrator can then place on those pages.

The Referral URL system allows users to access Britannica from outside the institution, for instance students can gain access to help with homework.

It is important to note that if there is any complex scripting used on the web pages that our links are used on this can cause the URL to be altered or masked from us. If the institution would like to check for this or is not sure exactly how the Referring URL is presented to us then they can verify this using the following link. If this is placed where they would like the Britannica link(s) placed and is made to work in the same way when clicked on then the troubleshooting information given on the page that they are taken to will include the Referring URL as it is presented to us.
http://search.eb.com/customer_debug
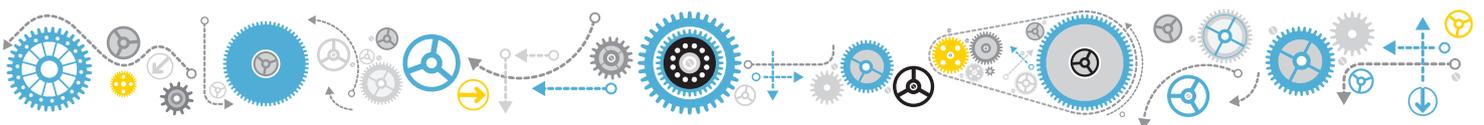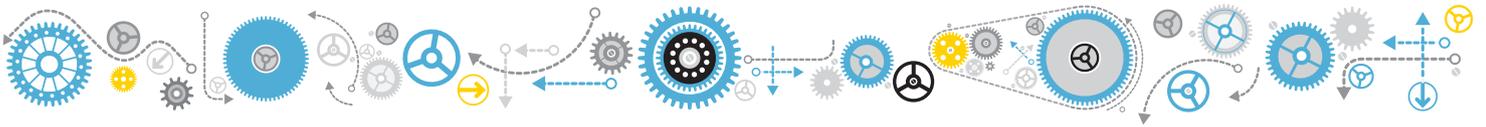
Library or ID Card

This system is more commonly used by libraries but we have found that the system can also work well within schools and universities that have an ID or library card system.

For this system we simply use the barcode number or unique identifying number of the card to authenticate the user. In order to be able to set this up, we need to know what the first and last card number in the rage is and how the patter works.

E.g.
ABC000001 to ABC999999
Pattern LLLNNNNNN (L = letter, N = number)

We can authenticate patterns containing random and/or fixed combinations of letters and numbers as also Check Digits.
Again, as with the Referral URL option, this system can be used within the institution as well as remotely.

Partner Authentication

With some of the more widely used Learning Platforms, we can set up an authentication system called Partner Authentication. For some platforms, such as Fronter, we can simply make sure we have the correct information for our system and then send an institution the details of how to set up access to Britannica within the Learning Platform. For other platforms, a third party group may be needed to provide the service.

This method could also be used through an independent website if the website programmer knows how. We can provide the relevant documentation for this if required but may take some time to develop.

This authentication method can be used within the institution or remotely.

Learning Platform

A number of Learning Platform developers have already looked to integrate the Britannica service into their platforms and we are familiar with working with these partners. If a school has a Learning Platform that we do not currently work with then we will try to develop a solution for them. This will normally involve the Referral URL method as described above.

Using a Learning Platform to authenticate access to Britannica allows users access both within the institution and remotely.

If you have any trouble accessing Britannica please contact our technical support manager, Adrian Murray: ukbol@britannica.co.uk
0800 917 7000 (from inside the UK)
+44-207 500 7843 (from outside the UK)
For general enquires please use the details below.

Phone: +44(0)20 7500 7800 | E-mail: enqbol@britannica.co.uk | Web: britannica.co.uk