

The Online Riches of the Boston Public Library (BPL)

The BPL, one of the nation's foremost public libraries, offers resources online that rival those of the university libraries in the Pioneer Valley. Fortunately, all you need to access these riches is an "eCard", which is available free of charge to any Massachusetts resident.

How Do I Get My eCard?

Go to www.bpl.org and at the left in the gray/brown panel select General Information, then Borrowing & Circulation Information, then eCards. Here you will find instructions for enrolling along with information about benefits to cardholders and procedures. Click on the blue Get Your Card or Renew button. You will be asked to provide your name, address, and e-mail address, and registration is completed within a minute or two. With your eCard you will have access to everything the BPL offers to cardholders from home. BPL eCards expire after 3 years, at which time you simply register again for a new card.

What's Available Only for Holders of a BPL "eCard"?

Click on the heading Electronic Resources in the brown/gray panel to access the numerous databases available under these topics; click on any of these headings to start exploring:

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| Architecture | Encyclopedia | Language Learning | Psychology |
| Art | General | Law | Religion |
| Audio Books | Genealogy | Literature | Science |
| Biography | Government | Music | Sociology |
| Business | Health | Newspapers | Sports |
| eBooks | History | Philosophy | Statistics |
| Education | Images | Political Science | Video |

You can search for and read recent and historical newspapers, academic journals, electronic books, and more here. Many items are downloadable and can be printed out. Notable for serious research in many fields, for example, is JSTOR, an archive of 1,000+ academic journals plus monographs that normally is available from academic libraries only with affiliation as a faculty member or student. (JSTOR = journal storage.) Most of the databases on offer in this section of the BPL site are available only by subscription at high prices or only to members of institutions, but they are free to us here simply as Massachusetts citizens.

What's Available from BPL Online for Noncardholders?

The library also offers open online offerings are under various headings in the brown/gray panel at top of the home page. Be sure to explore these resources as well. For example:

BPL catalogs the main catalog plus specialty catalogs

Online collections: the BPL Anti-Slavery Manuscripts Collection for digitized original documents; the John Adams Library for digitized copies of his personal collection; the Government Information from Our

Collections, for digitized copies of publications from local and federal government; the Flickr Collection for scans of photos, posters, postcards, lithographs, and other graphic media; also, there are audio and video archives

Research and specialized services: the Leventhal Map Center for 13,700 digitized historical maps; the Reference & Reader's Advisory for lists of librarian-recommended online resources with clickable links under 38 topic areas.