

CCL-EAR COMMITTEE REVIEW

ebrary
June 2011

Ebrary was founded in 1999 as an aggregator of ebooks and journals. The company was acquired by Proquest in January 2011 and continues to offer full text, ebook packages in subscription, perpetual access, and patron driven access models. The Consortium currently offers an ebrary product called *Community & Career Colleges*. This is a subscription to over 23,000 ebook titles across disciplines. All ebooks in the collection are available to multiple users simultaneously.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION for COMMUNITY COLLEGES: 3, 3

- 1 --- Not recommended
- 2 --- Recommended with reservations as noted
- 3 --- Recommended
- 4 --- Outstanding offer

This collection offers community colleges affordable access to a large collection of current ebooks, many of which are from respected academic publishers. While this collection does not include ebooks with perpetual access rights, ebrary's subscription model allows libraries to have immediate access to a collection of over 23,000 ebooks, all with multiple access rights. Ebrary provides free MARC records so that ebooks can be incorporated into library catalogs and it has a database-like interface, giving users multiple ways to search ebrary content. In addition, ebrary offers users two different feature-rich reading applications that enhance the online reading experience.

RATINGS FOR SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE DATABASE:

Features in the sections below were examined and rated on a four-point scale: 1=Poor; 2=Needs Improvement; 3=Good; 4=Excellent.

DATABASE CONTENT/FORMAT: 3, 3

Ebrary content is well suited to the curriculum of community colleges in California. The *Community & Career Colleges* collection offered by the CCL is comprised, at present, of 23,000 full text titles. Content is current, and for the most part from respected academic, technical, and public interest publishers. There are a small number of titles in the collection published by ElecBook that are freely available from Project Gutenberg (www.gutenberg.org).

Publishers included in aggregated ebook collections vary with each negotiated contract. For example, Island Press, a major environmental policy publisher, is well represented in the *Community & Career Colleges* collection, but only from 2000 through 2007. Titles are added to the *Community & Career Colleges* collection as they become available. Titles are not removed from the collection.

For the purpose of this review, four topics were chosen: global warming, fire ecology, nursing care of the diabetic patient, and water resources in California. The initial search results for these topics were current; the first 40 items for each search displayed were published in the last ten years. Nearly all of the items retrieved were from academic, technical, or public interest publishers. No Project Gutenberg titles appeared in the first 100 items displayed for these four topics.

SEARCH INTERFACE: 2.5, 3

Users can run a simple search, advanced search, and subject browse. They can also go directly into titles from "Top Picks in Community College," although it was not clear what "Top Picks" signifies. Ebrary provides an array of search tools to get desired results, but these tools may prove to be too cumbersome for novice users.

Simple Search

At the top of the ebrary home page, users can run a simple search. This is a full-text book search. A search for "global warming" returned 3,714 documents/ebooks, which is roughly 14% of the entire ebook collection. By default, ebooks are sorted by relevance, but they can also be sorted by title, contributor, publisher, or date. From the search results page, users can limit the existing search by subject. The global warming search prompts 15 Library of Congress headings and sub-headings to choose from including Climatic Changes, Prevention, Social Aspects, etc.

The screenshot displays the Ebrary search interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Info', 'Search', 'QuickView', and 'Bookshelf'. The 'Search' tab is active, showing a search bar with 'global warming' entered. A red arrow points to the search bar with the label 'Initial search'. Below the search bar are buttons for 'Search ebrary', 'Advanced', and 'All Subjects'. The search results are displayed in a table with columns for 'TITLE RESULTS', 'CHAPTER RESULTS', and 'SEARCHES'. Below the search bar, there are radio buttons for 'Focus your search using: Any of the selected subjects (e.g. Math OR Science)' and 'All of the selected subjects (e.g. Math AND Science)'. A list of subject filters is shown, including 'Climatic Changes', 'Renewable Energy Sources', 'Congresses', 'United States', 'Environmental Policy', 'Social Aspects', 'Antarctica', 'Effect Of Human Beings On', 'Prevention', 'Environmental Aspects', 'Environmental Protection', 'Economic Aspects', 'Government Policy', 'Africa, Sub-Saharan', and 'Environmental Conditions'. A red arrow points to the subject filters with the label 'Limit by subject'. Below the subject filters is a 'Search ebrary' button. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Save Search' and 'Export Search Results'. The search results are displayed in a table with columns for 'View' (Short, Medium, Long) and 'Sort results by' (Relevance, Title, Contributor, Publisher, Date). A red box highlights the text 'Showing 1 - 15 of 3,513 documents'. The first result is 'Last Exit : Privatization and Deregulation of the U. S. Transportation System' by Winston, Clifford, published by Brookings Institution Press in 2010. The result includes a book cover image and buttons for 'Show Table of Contents', 'Find Similar', and 'Add to My Bookshelf'.

Users can also select the Chapter Results tab to see search results by chapter. Chapter results are generated from a full text search and are displayed at the chapter level. In the screen shot below, the top seven chapters come from five different ebooks. The chapter results are much smaller than the ebook results. For this particular search, there are only 15 individual chapters listed.

• global warming

Rank	Chapter	Title
█	Bibliography	Global Warming Desk Reference
█	2 Science Focus and Scope	Implementing Climate and Global Change Research: A Review of the Final U.S. Climate Change Science Program Strategic Plan
█	3 Meeting the Nation's Needs for Climate and Global Change Information	Implementing Climate and Global Change Research: A Review of the Final U.S. Climate Change Science Program Strategic Plan
█	Chapter 4: How Global Warming (Allegedly) Works	Climate Confusion : How Global Warming Hysteria Leads to Bad Science, Pandering Politicians and Misguided Policies That Hurt the Poor
█	Chapter 1: Global Warming Hysteria	Climate Confusion : How Global Warming Hysteria Leads to Bad Science, Pandering Politicians and Misguided Policies That Hurt the Poor
█	Part One: The Challenge	The Climate Challenge: 101 Solutions to Global Warming
█	Chapter 8: Dumb Global Warming Solutions	Climate Confusion : How Global Warming Hysteria Leads to Bad Science, Pandering Politicians and Misguided Policies That Hurt the Poor

Another search for “water resources” returned 17,695 documents/ebooks, which is roughly 75% of the entire ebook collection. Adding “California” to the search did little to improve it, returning 13,865 documents/ebooks. Refining the search by using quotations around "water resources" helped to return a much more manageable 1,202 documents. Because the simple search is a full text search—not a traditional keyword search—a search for water resources returns ebooks that contain both of the words water and resources. This makes the simple search neither simple nor consistently effective. Users expecting a keyword-like experience will be presented with an unwieldy list of ebooks. Most simple search queries will have to be refined, using quotations and subject heading limiters. While this method of searching and refining can produce good results, the lack of a simple and effective keyword search is troubling. For this

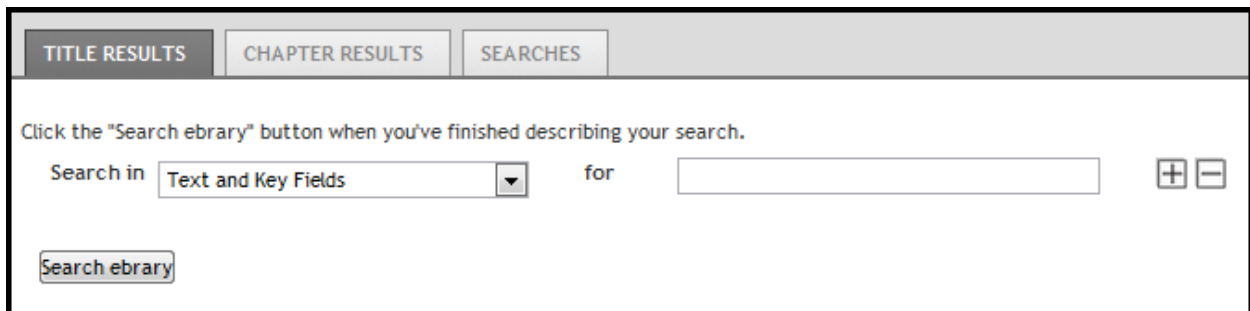
reason, users may defer to the library catalog to find ebrary content as opposed to wading through search results that often include more than half of the total ebook collection.

Also, ebrary's use of the word "documents" in the search results is confusing. While it is possible for a user to limit an advanced search by document type (books, journals, maps, reports, and sheet music), there are less than 200 documents that aren't ebooks. It seems that users would be better served by eliminating this small number of documents, limiting search results to ebooks only. Without this change, the user may assume that the results list includes a significant number of non-ebook documents.

Advanced Search

The Advanced Search allows users to build a search query with as many facets as they like. Users start with one search box with plus and minus buttons. Options for the search drop-down menu include: text and key fields, text, subject, title, author, etc. After creating one search facet, users can use the plus and minus buttons to add or subtract search boxes.

The first default option in the advanced search screen is to search in text and key fields. The second option, when opening the drop down menu is simply text. Searches using both options returned the same results. It was unclear how the two options differed. After an initial advanced search, users are given the option to focus their search by selecting one or more subjects (like the simple search). Users can check subject heading boxes or enter the subject headings into one of the first three search boxes.



The screenshot shows the Ebrary Advanced Search interface. At the top, there are three tabs: "TITLE RESULTS" (selected), "CHAPTER RESULTS", and "SEARCHES". Below the tabs, a message reads: "Click the 'Search ebrary' button when you've finished describing your search." The main search area contains a "Search in" dropdown menu set to "Text and Key Fields", followed by the word "for" and an empty text input box. To the right of the input box are plus (+) and minus (-) buttons. At the bottom left of the search area is a "Search ebrary" button.

Subject Browse

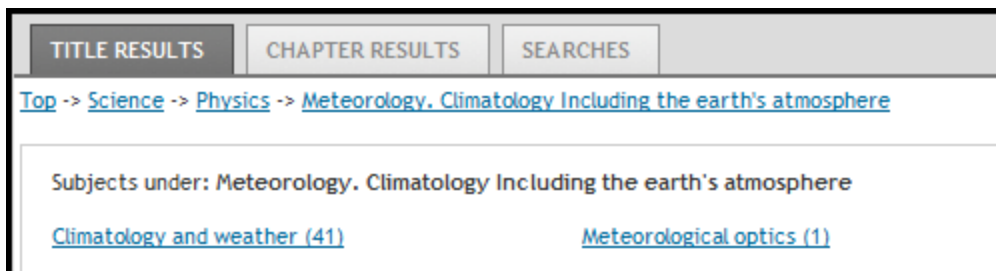
Another way that users can find ebooks is through a subject browse. By selecting the all subjects link on the homepage, users are taken to a broad list of 20 subjects.

Select a subject

- [Agriculture](#)
- [Auxiliary Sciences of History](#)
- [Bibliography, Library Science, Information Resources \(General\)](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Fine Arts](#)
- [General Works](#)
- [Geography, Anthropology, Recreation](#)
- [History \(General\) and History of Europe](#)
- [History: America](#)
- [Language and Literature](#)
- [Law](#)
- [Medicine](#)
- [Military Science](#)
- [Music and Books on Music](#)
- [Naval Science](#)
- [Philosophy, Psychology, Religion](#)
- [Political Science](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Social Sciences](#)
- [Technology](#)

Using the subject list, users can start with a general subject and then browse narrower subjects. With only 20 subject headings to start, users may struggle to find their intended subject areas. In order to find ebooks on global warming, users would need to select the Science subject link, then Physics, and then Meteorology, Climatology Including the earth's atmosphere. It would be helpful if there was a more expansive list of subjects on the all subjects start page. That being said, if users can navigate the levels of subject headings, they can find relevant titles.

With each new subject selected, the database creates a breadcrumb at the top of the page and displays narrower subject headings beneath.

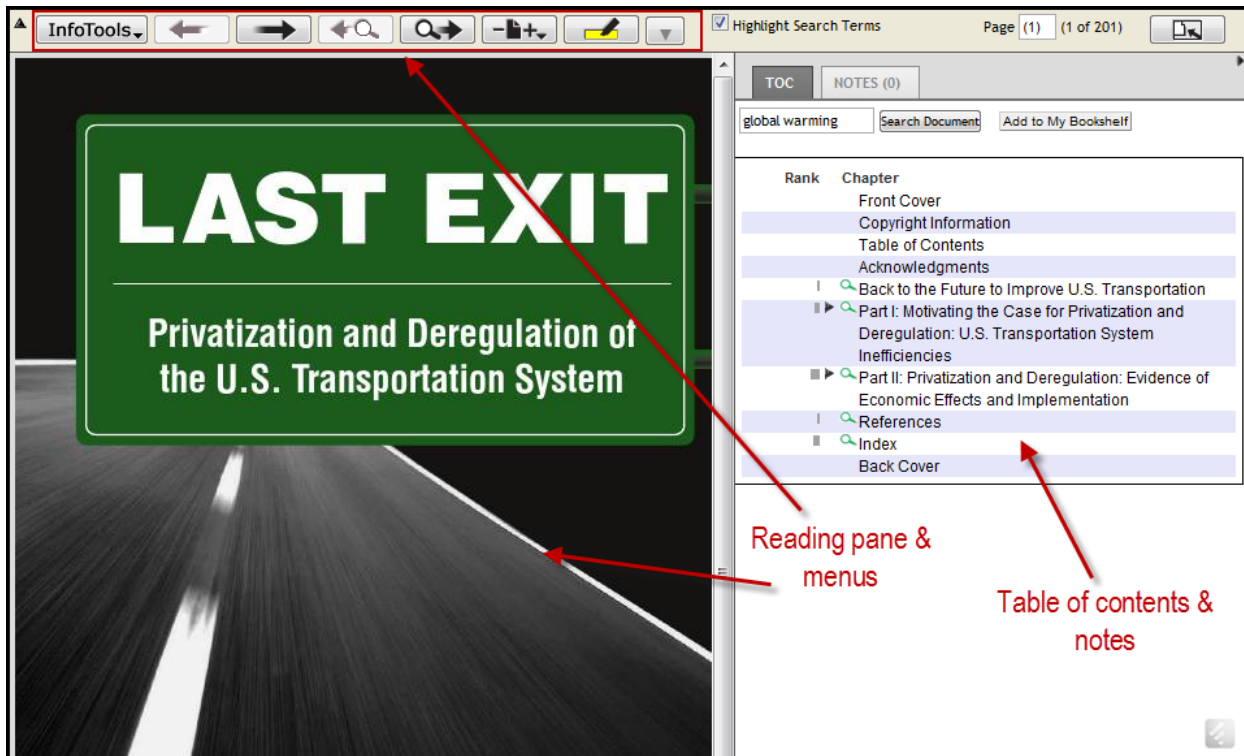


Reader Interface

There are two different ebrary readers—an in-browser QuickView reader and the downloadable Unity reader that provides a little more functionality. The default reader is the in-browser reader.

In order to read from the downloadable reader, a user must click on a separate button. This starts the approximately 10-second process of opening the Unity reader on the desktop.

The QuickView reader offers most of the functionality of the Unity reader. The reader is essentially divided into three sections: the reading pane, the table of contents, and the menus at the top of the page.



The first menu item is InfoTools, which allows users to quickly access information from the Web while reading. Users can highlight text and quickly run searches from the InfoTools menu. By selecting Define, the database opens up and runs a search in Merriam-Webster online, Explain opens up an encyclopedia metasearch engine, Locate opens up MaqQuest or Cartographia, which is an ebrary product that includes maps, and Who opens up Biography Online or Wikipedia. Users can also use the InfoTools menu to run additional ebrary searches, general web searches, news searches, web video searches, and image searches. Ebrary populates each search with the highlighted text, which allows users to have quick access to background and supplementary information. It should be noted that many of the referring websites have advertisements, both print and video, which can be distracting. Users can also use the InfoTools menu to copy and paste text from an ebook. When pasted into a document, a citation is included under the document text. Currently, ebrary's MLA style is not up to date.

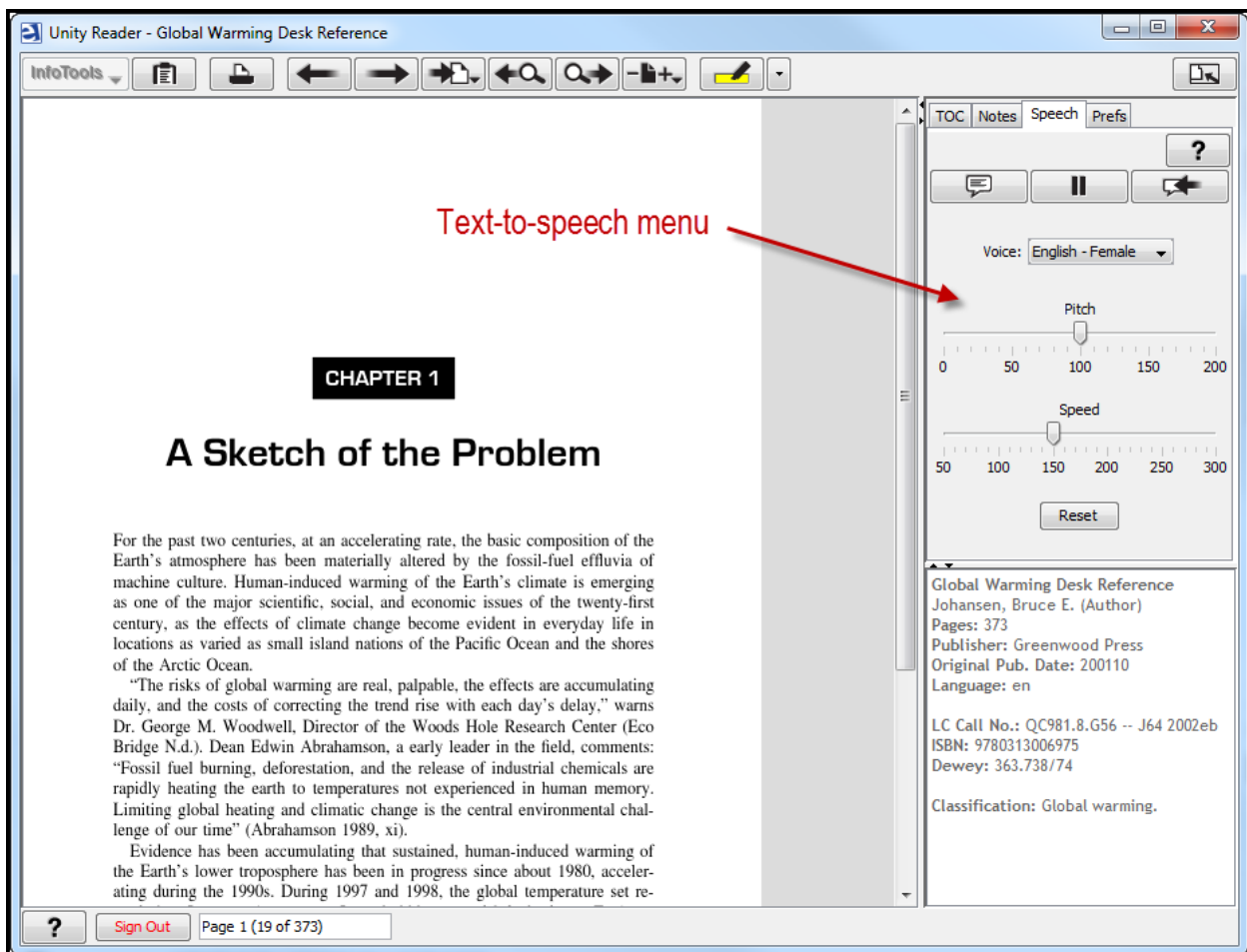
The reading pane has simple tools for online reading. Users can easily page through an ebook or skip to the next instance of search terms. The reading pane can be reduced or enlarged. The right side of the reader includes the table of contents, which allows users to quickly jump to individual chapters. There is also a search box for searching the contents of the ebook that is being viewed.

Ebrary offers a powerful highlighting and note-taking feature. After logging in, users can highlight text and/or create post-it style notes in three different colors. After creating a note or a highlight, ebrary keeps an organized list by page number in the right pane of the reader in the tab next to the table of contents. From this tab, users can easily view all of their notes or

highlighted sections for a particular ebook. All notes are hyperlinked so when users click on a note or highlight, they are taken to the corresponding page.

When a highlight or note is created, the ebook is automatically moved to the bookshelf. From the bookshelf, users are able to see all of the highlighted text and notes from each book.

The Unity reader, the ebrary desktop application, provides some key improvements over the QuickView reader. There are two additional tabs in the right pane of the reader—Speech and Prefs. The Speech tab has text-to-speech tools that will read aloud highlighted sections. Users can have selected text read aloud in English or Spanish and by a male or female voice. While the computer generated text-to-speech can be difficult to understand, and is not a viable option for reading multiple pages, it is still a valuable feature for having sections read aloud and especially valuable for users needing to have a section translated into Spanish (the accuracy of the Spanish translation was not verified for this review). The Prefs tab allows users to set the default style (MLA, APA, etc.) for citations. Another nice feature of the Unity reader is that the reader panes and windows can be resized so that users can view two pages side by side (like an open book). One major flaw with the Unity reader is that there is no visible search box or keyboard shortcut. Users must use the InfoTools menu and select Search Document.



USER SUPPORT: 3, 3

To get to the help menu, users can click on the Help link in the upper right hand corner of any of the ebrary web pages. In the Unity reader, there is a button in the lower left hand corner indicated by a question mark symbol that displays a help menu for the Unity reader. The main

help menu provides 15 general sections. When clicked, the section titles expand to display the contents of the section. A user can click on Searching to read the entire help article, or click on one of the three narrower search topics: performing a search, narrowing and expanding the search focus, or examining search results. The help articles are easy to navigate and are clearly and concisely written. The last menu item is Contact Technical Support, which opens up an email form when clicked. In the instructions, it says that all questions will be answered within two business days.

Additionally, there is a link to the online training site on the ebrary start page. Here, end users and librarians will find a schedule for free webinars, training videos, PowerPoint demonstrations, and links to user and librarian FAQs and knowledge base. There is no live help via chat or telephone.

COST: 4, 4

For a smaller library (FTEs <5,000) the *Community Colleges and Careers* comes out to less than 11 cents per title, per year. For larger schools (15,000 FTEs), the price approximates 30 cents per title. This *Community Colleges and Careers* collection includes no ownership rights to materials. While some libraries may be wary of the subscription-based models for ebooks, the size and comprehensive scope of the *Community Colleges and Careers* collection, as well as multiple user access to all of the ebooks makes the pricing for this offering a good value.

Libraries seeking a more permanent collection can consider adding another ebrary purchase model alongside their subscription, such as Patron Driven Access. A minimum deposit of \$5,000 is suggested for those libraries wishing to participate in Patron Driven Access. *Community Colleges and Careers* subscribers may also purchase a Starter Pack of core selected titles.

AVAILABILITY/ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICE: 3, 3

IP and proxy authentication are supported for remote users and the database is ADA compliant. In addition, ebrary provides services for visually impaired users. Within the Unity reader, users can utilize the aforementioned text-to-speech feature, and in the QuickView reader, users can turn on accessibility mode, which makes the advanced search screen more user-friendly and optimizes the reader for stand-alone text-to-speech programs, like JAWS.

COUNTER compliant usage statistics track ebook usage by subject (can be limited by calendar date, month, and day of week), number of sessions, documents viewed, page views, pages copied, and pages printed.

Ebrary provides a Blackboard integration feature which allows ebrary content to be opened within Blackboard without requiring users to authenticate via their institution's proxy server.

Ebrary is currently developing software to make their content available on mobile devices.

CONCLUSION

Although ebooks have been around for more than a decade, it is only recently, with the availability of affordable and adaptable personal readers and tablets, that this medium has become popular among consumers. Ebrary's scope, content, and currency make it a good choice for community college libraries. The search and viewing interface may frustrate library patrons who have grown accustomed to intuitive personal readers, but these challenges are similar to those inherent in all aggregated library databases.