

Part One - What is a persistent URL, and why make one?

Have you ever had a link to an e-journal that worked when you created it but wouldn't work when you wanted to use it again? That is because the URL was not "persistent" or "durable." A persistent link or URL uses an intermediary to locate the resource you wish to link to. This means that while the location of the article may change, your link continues to find the resource.

The persistent URL is like a grocery store clerk who always knows where the grapefruit is, even if the grapefruit has moved since you last went grocery shopping. Instead of directing people to the grapefruit, you can direct them to the clerk. Online, the redirection from the clerk to the resource would happen instantly, and seamlessly.

Links can change without notice on the internet – if you are linking to a document on someone else's webpage, they may re-organize and your URL will no longer be valid. Sometimes addresses displayed in web browsers contain session IDs and other unique identifiers that change with each instance of access. Simply copying and pasting a URL from the browser won't always allow others to access the resource.

Lastly, persistent URLs, if generated properly, have the Dalhousie proxy information built in; therefore, off-campus users will be prompted to enter their Dalhousie log-in when they access the materials remotely. They won't be turned away by the journal asking them to subscribe because they will be recognized as a Dalhousie-affiliated user.

Using persistent URLs to link to journal articles from BLS or a web page will save time and frustration. Users will be able to access journal articles quickly and easily without having to remember the citation information. Even if the original URL changes, your link is valid for as long as you wish to use it.

URLs that you copy and paste may expire. A persistent URL solves this problem and directs the user to the resource seamlessly, even if it has moved since you last visited it. Please watch part two of this tutorial to find out how to make a persistent URL!