OpenAthens FAQ

What is OpenAthens?

OpenAthens is a single sign-on authentication service that allows you to access state-funded online resources such as LearningExpress, Creativebug, Utah Newspapers, HeinOnline, and various research databases.

Why is Utah's Online Public Library using it?

OpenAthens offers increased security and control of library resources, reduces service interruptions, and allows users to access online resources across library databases with just one login. All you need is your library card and an email address to create your free single sign-on account.

Why do we have to do this now? What has changed?

Library resources are expensive and the State Library is required to gather usage statistics for every public library in order to justify the cost. Usage statistics are used to evaluate our online resources and to determine value and return on investment (ROI) for each library. They also track the number of users for each resource. The previous method of authentication did not allow us to gather this statistical information and did not provide adequate security and privacy assurances for you as a user.

How does that affect me as a library patron?

When accessing online resources, the first-time user will need to create their own OpenAthens account, using their local library barcode number and email. This will prompt an activation email that will allow the user to set a password and activate their account. Once your account is active, you will use that login each time you access one of the state-funded online resources.

Will this affect how I login to Libby/OverDrive?

No. You will continue to log in to Libby the same way as always. Libby/OverDrive is authenticated by your local library and will not require authentication through OpenAthens.

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What happens if I change devices or use a different browser?

Will OpenAthens remember me? OpenAthens uses cookies to remember your device's IP address. If you change web services – from Firefox to Chrome or Internet Explorer – you will be asked to login again. Additionally, if you change devices, like from a laptop to a mobile phone, you will be asked to login again.

Once I have signed in via OpenAthens, how long does the session last?

An OpenAthens session typically lasts until the browser is closed or is inactive for a significant period.

What happens if I clear my cookies daily, weekly, or monthly?

You will be asked to login again.

What happens if I never clear my cookies or change my browser?

It depends on your browser, but generally OpenAthens' temporary browser cookie expires every eight hours. After eight hours, you will be prompted to log in again. Also, if you clear your browser cookies or close your browser session, the cookies are lost and you will need to log in again.

Is OpenAthens collecting my personal information?

No. OpenAthens collects only the information that you provide at the time of creating your personal login, which is name, email address, and library barcode. This information will only be used to allow you access to the state-funded, online resources and to reset your individual password. Any usage information gathered is strictly statistical, and not connected to you personally. Personal information is not collected.

I have an OpenAthens account. Do I need to create a separate user account for a particular database?
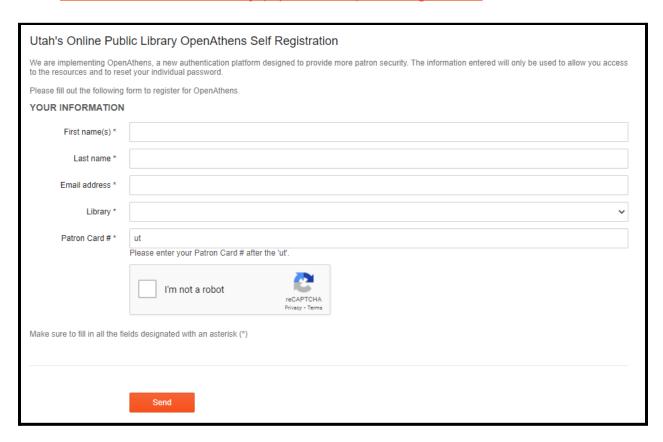
Some resources may require additional steps for full or added functionality and privacy, such as saving your progress in an online tutorial or career preparation test progress. The only online resources that require this are [LearningExpress](#) and [Creativebug](#).

I activated my account but can't log in.

Once you have activated your account, go ahead and try logging in to the MyAthens portal directly (do not reuse the activation link). Also, try clearing your browser's history, cache, and cookies.

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How do I self-register for an OpenAthens account?

Go to Utah's Online Public Library (OpenAthens) Self Registration.

Complete the form using your name, preferred email address, local library, and local library barcode number. **Do not erase the "ut" in the "Patron Card #" field. It must precede your barcode number with no spaces.**

Complete the reCATPCHA and click on "Send."

Check your email inbox for the activation email, it may have gone to your spam folder.

Follow the instructions in the email.

If you have trouble registering for an OpenAthens account please email usl@utah.gov.