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Links, Links Everywhere: Supporting Creation of Reliable Access URLs

Jeffrey M. Mortimore
Georgia Southern University



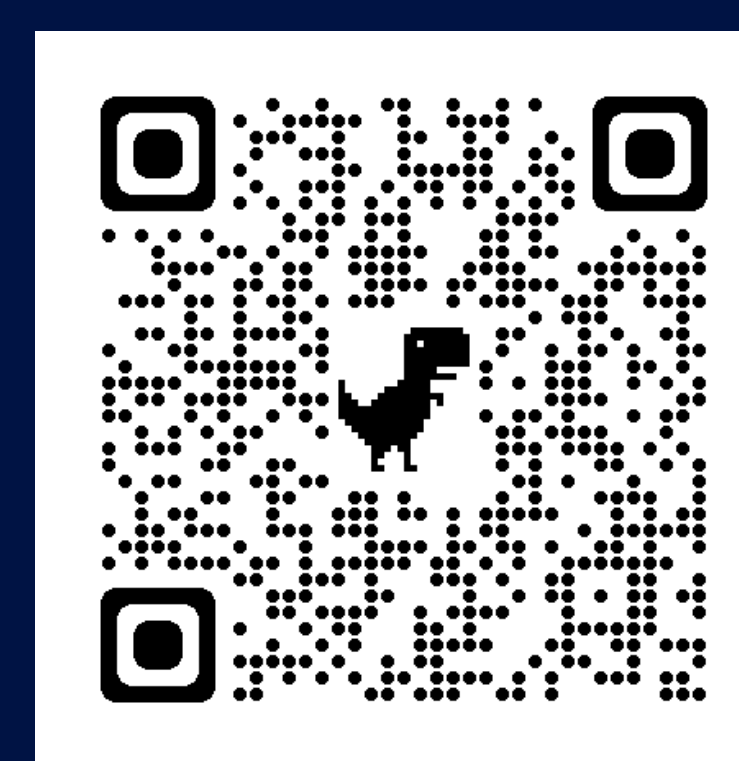
Abstract

Creating reliable resource links is a challenging task, for patrons and library personnel alike! Databases have different linking requirements, ranging from identifying the correct base URL to revising the URL for remote authentication. Built-in linking features can be unreliable, especially for off-campus users. Linking isn't just a technical issue, it's an equity issue.

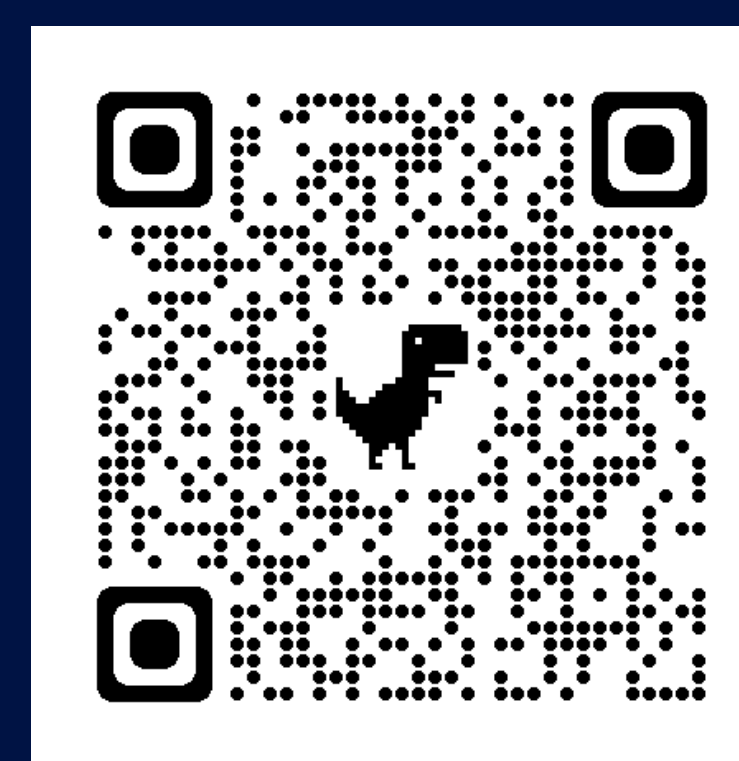
To address this challenge, we developed a dedicated "Linking to Library Resources" guide that includes unique tutorials for each database we support. Library personnel use them for staff training and reference, and liaisons share them with faculty when creating URLs for their courses.

This poster looks at the "Linking to Library Resources" guide and tutorials in detail, highlighting ways this resource supports access to library resources.

- ### Recommended Practices
- Promote articles with library personnel and offer to train them. The more familiar your colleagues are with the articles, the more likely they are to use them in reference and instruction.
 - Add articles to your regular workflows for rolling out new and updated databases, and for rolling back discontinued databases.
 - Identify databases that can share the same linking article, for example EBSCOhost and ProQuest platform databases. Similarly, reuse and adapt instructions for databases that follow similar procedures.
 - Plan for ongoing auditing and maintenance of linking articles. Student workers can help.
 - In a consortium? Consider creating a shared guide if your authentication strategy supports it.



See the "Linking to Library Resources" LibGuide



See an example detailed description

The Problem

If your web presence is like ours, broken links abound! Broken links appear on the library website, in the learning management system, in syllabuses and reading lists, etc. Some links break naturally, and some are bad to begin with, but we worry about both. Library personnel are only a little less likely to create bad links than patrons – our colleagues need as much support creating reliable links as patrons. Examples include:

The Dreaded Session ID:

<https://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=6367059c-2227-467d-9a35-51e7333233c%40sessionmgr102&bdata=#AN=gas.9915882143802950&db=cat05752a>

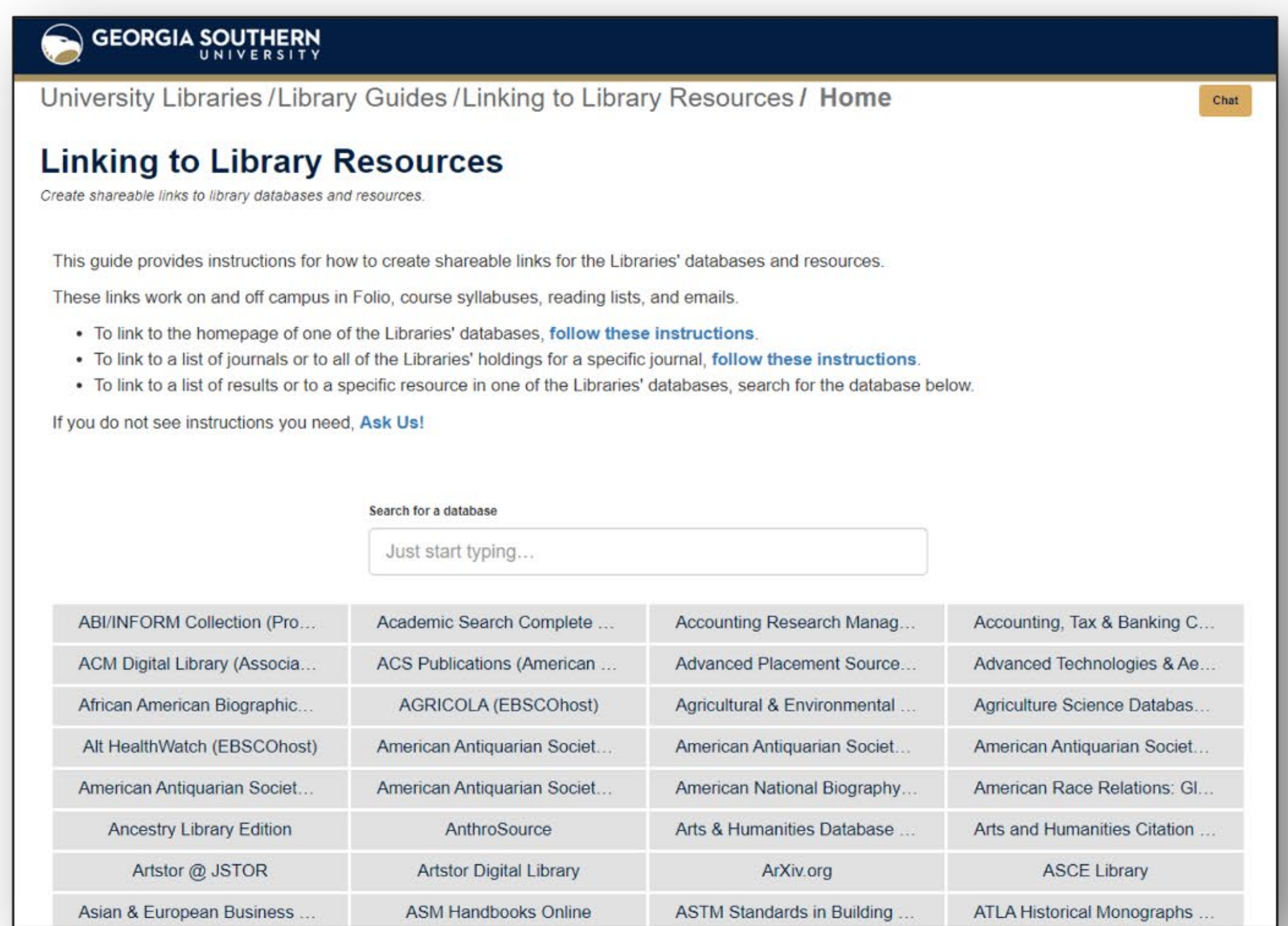
The Link that Doesn't Authenticate on Its Own:

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-68832-7>

Libraries need a practical but uniform way to support creating reliable access URLs, for patrons & library personnel alike!

Our Solution: The Linking To Library Resources Guide

Over the last two years, the Collection Services Department at Georgia Southern developed a public-facing "Linking to Library Resources" LibGuide that includes unique articles with steps for creating access URLs for all supported databases appearing on our A-Z Database List.



<https://georgiasouthern.libguides.com/links>

This guide includes:

- One article for creating database-level friendly URLs via the A-Z Database List
- One article for creating permalinks via our catalog and link resolver
- +/- 175 unique articles for creating shareable links for our ~350 databases

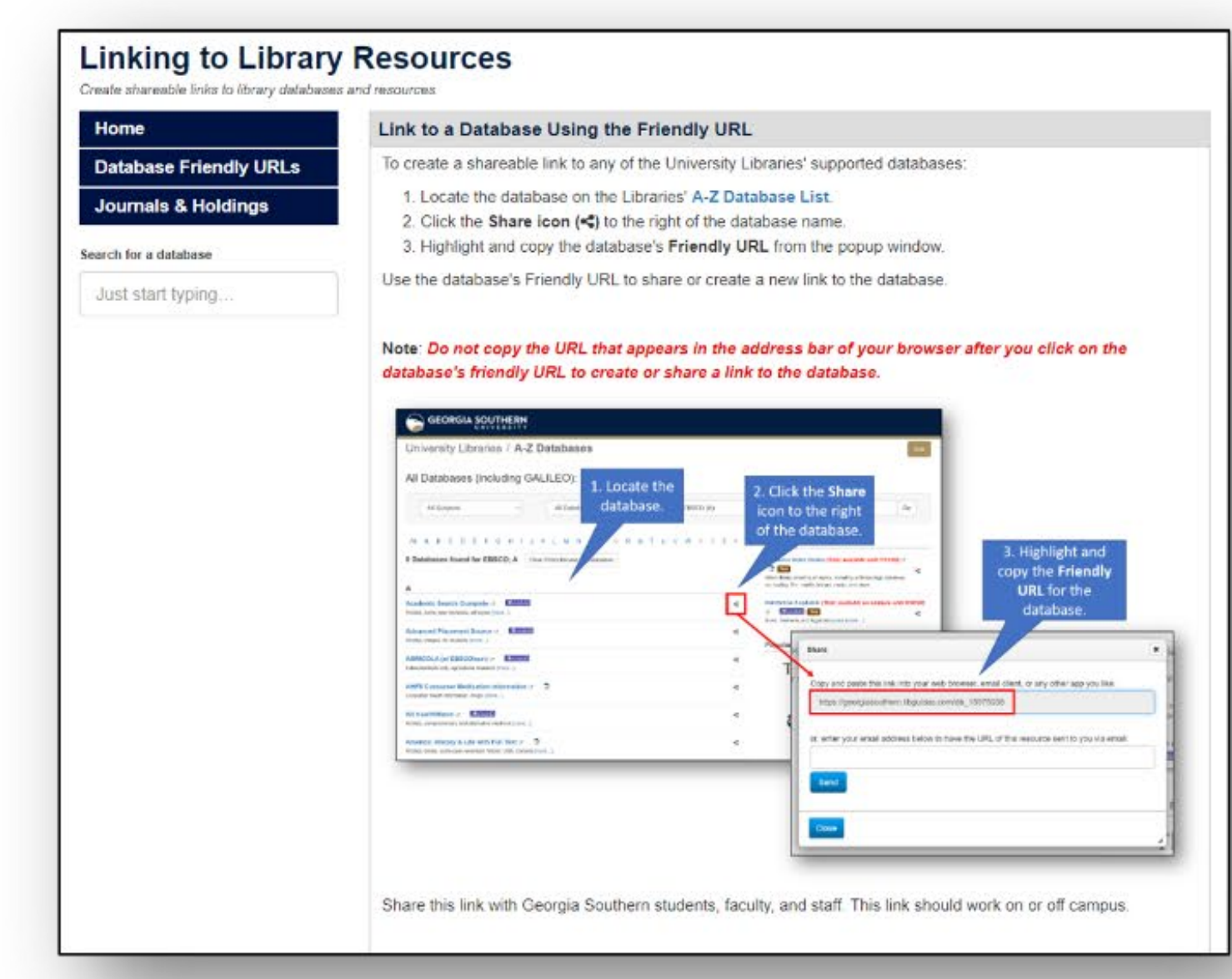
Both proprietary and open access databases are covered. When possible, articles include instructions for creating links to both item records and result lists. For proprietary databases, instructions include steps to rewrite the URL for authentication, either using OpenAthens or EZProxy depending on what the database supports.

All "Linking to Library Resources" articles are available on the Libraries' FAQ and via each database's detailed description. Since launching this guide in spring 2022, it receives about 300 views per month.

Database-Level Friendly URLs

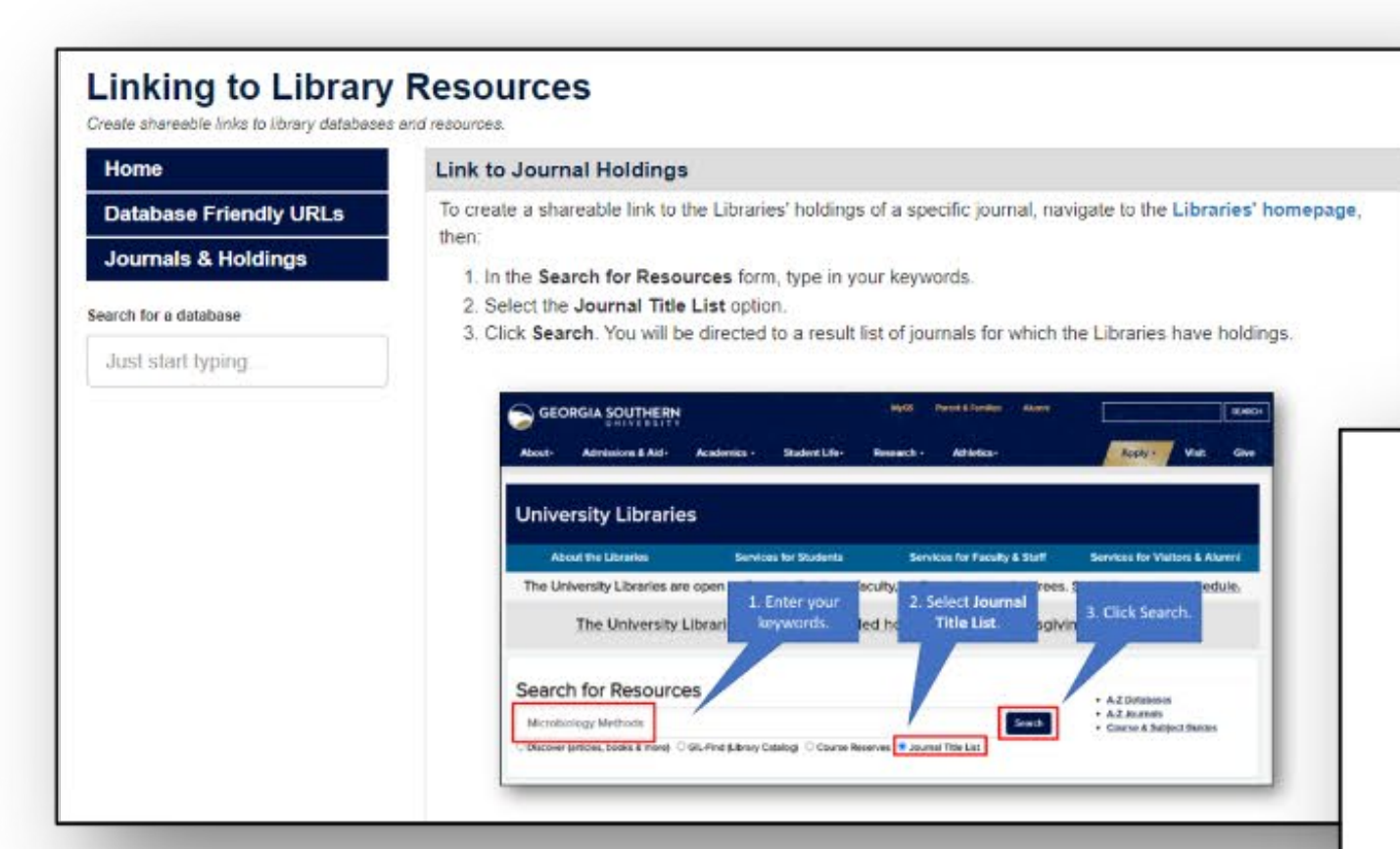
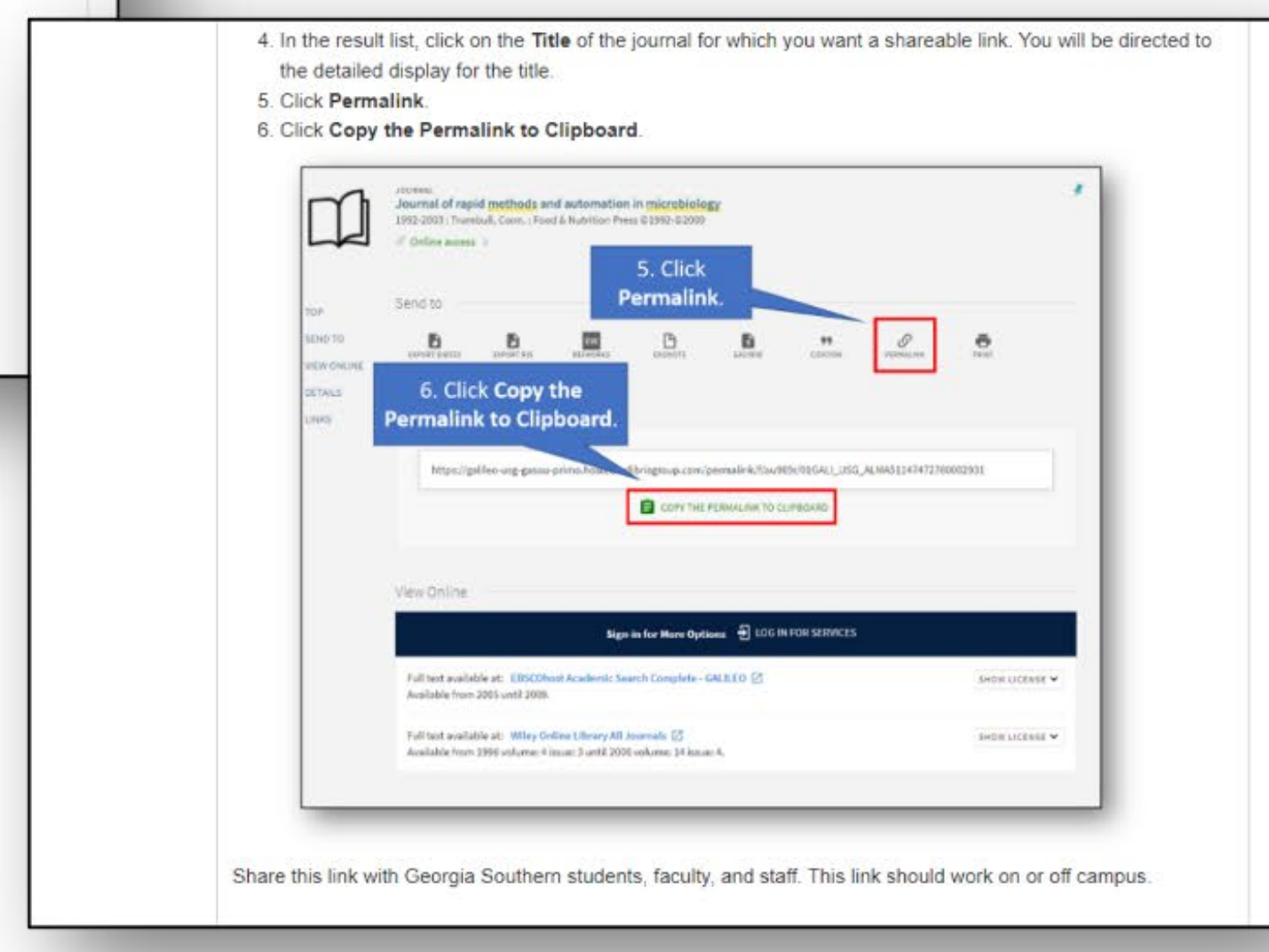
We use LibGuides' A-Z database list, so this article explains how to use the **Share** icon to obtain the friendly URL for each database.

We occasionally see library personnel using the address bar URL after clicking on the friendly URL, so this deserves an article!



Catalog & Link Resolver Permalinks

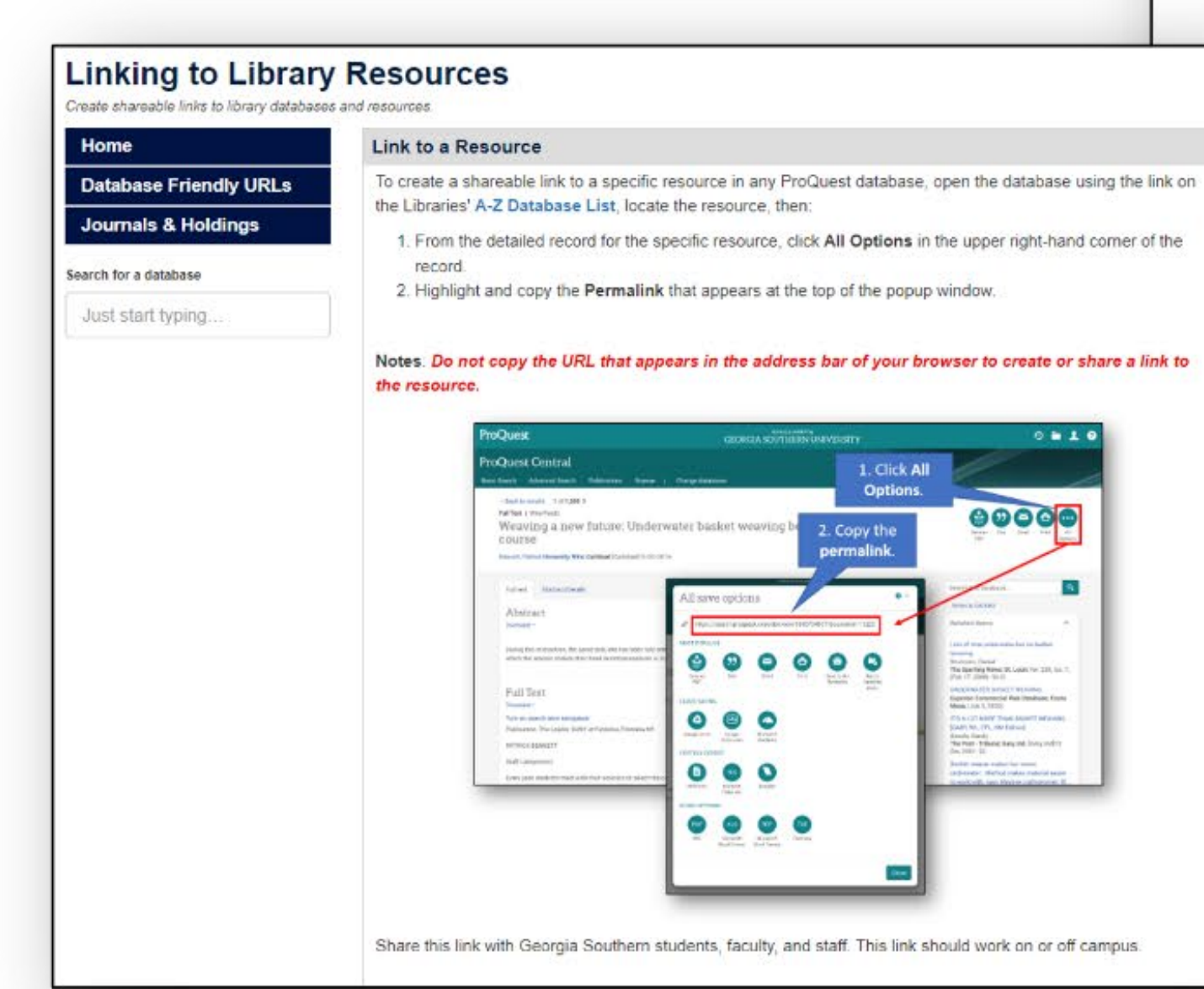
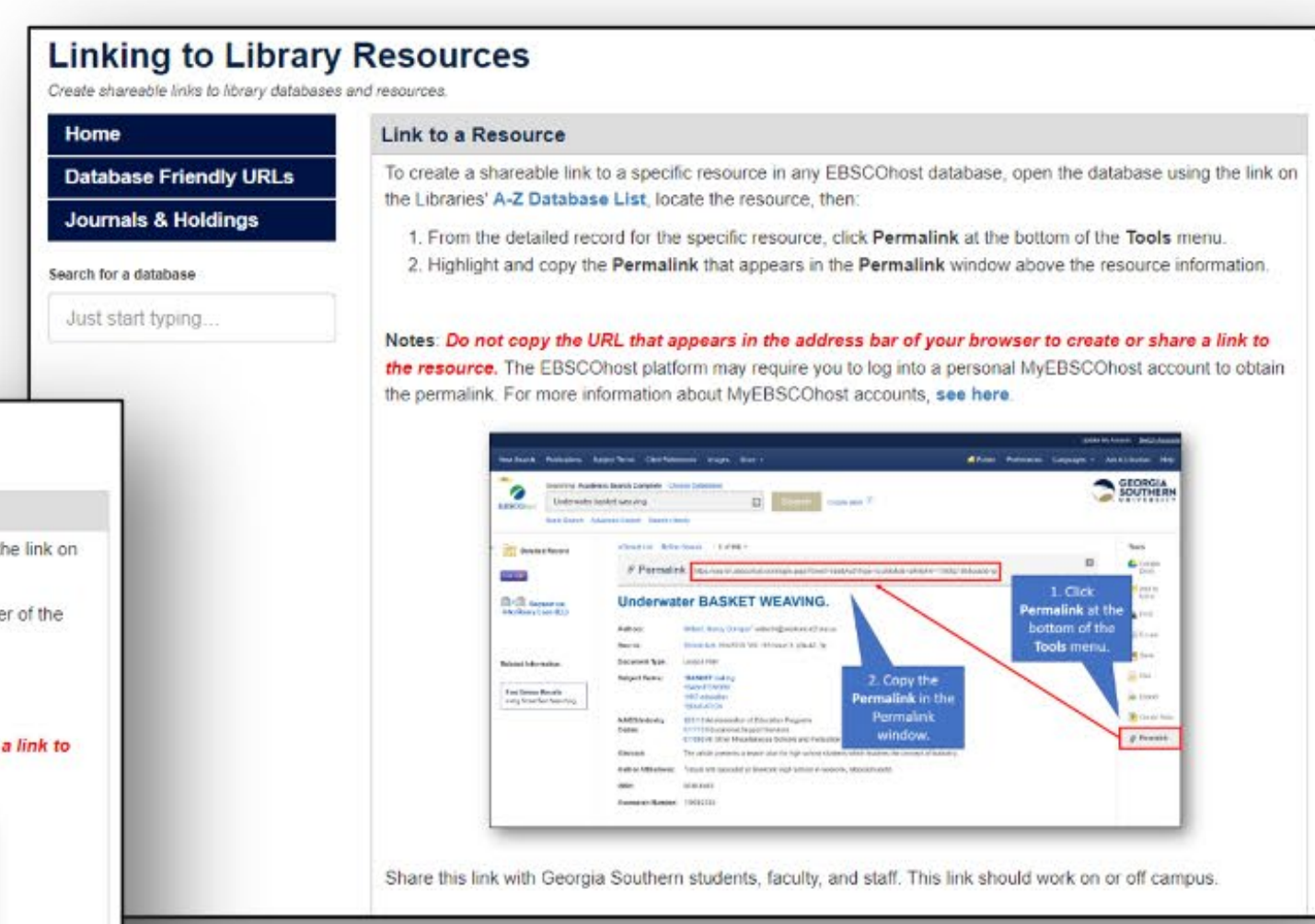
This article explains how to use the permalink feature in our catalog and link resolver records.

This article is primarily for the benefit of faculty, including those who link to the browse page for a particular journal title in the database rather than to the record in the catalog. As a result, their link doesn't account for additional holdings.

Database Shareable URLs

For every database that appears on our A-Z Database list, we include an article on how to create a link to an item record and/or a result list.

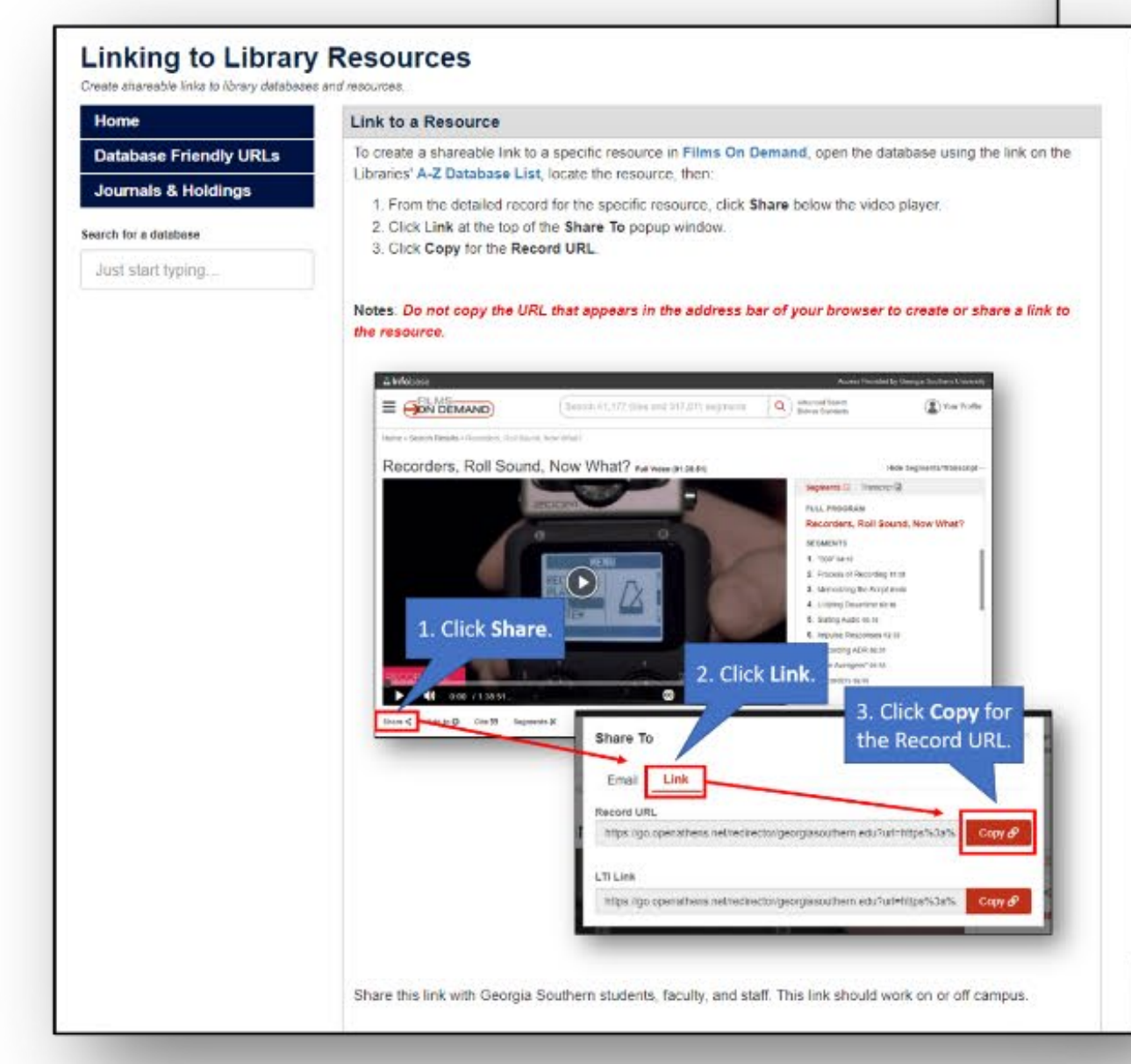
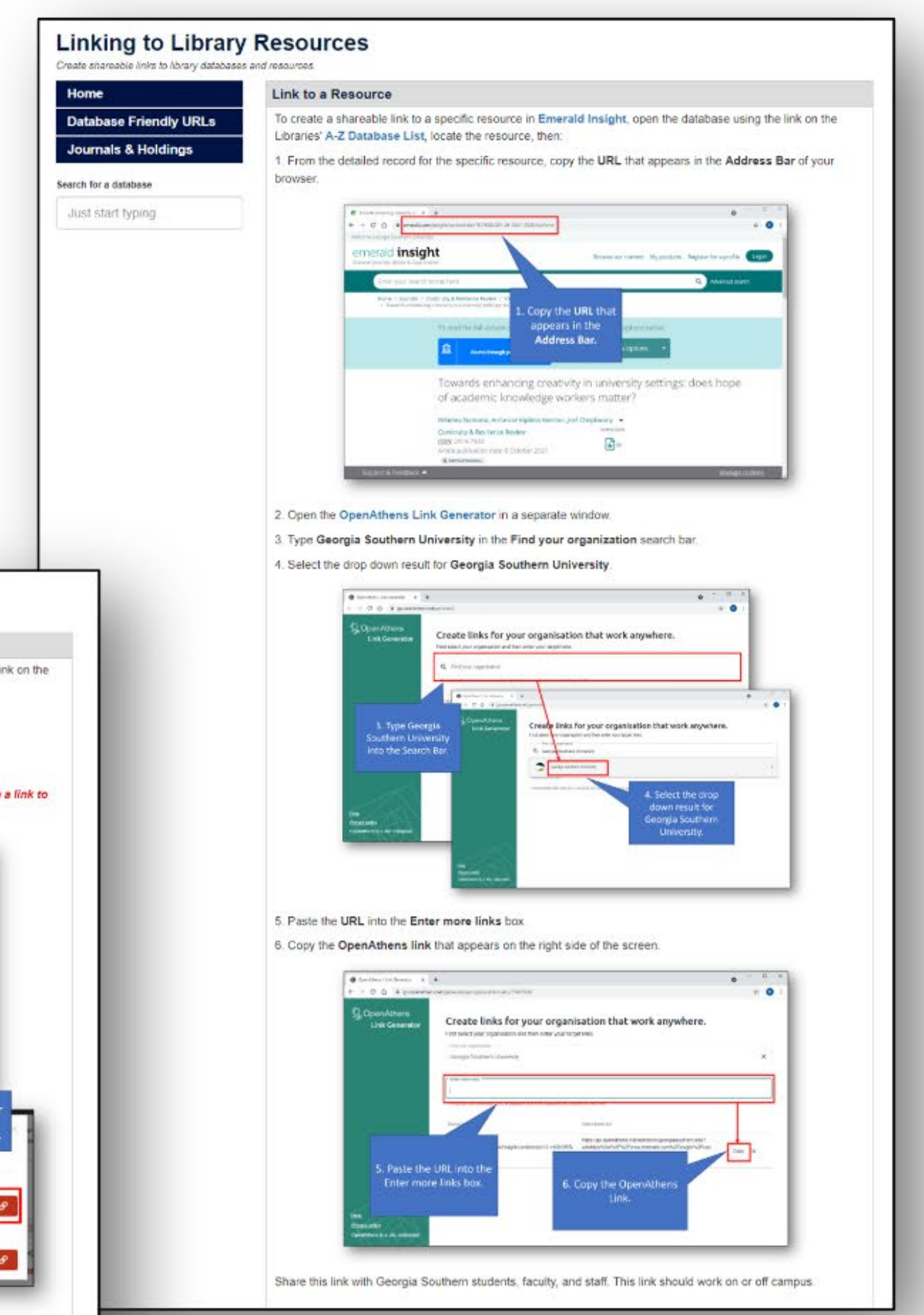



In each case, we explain how to create a link that will authenticate on or off campus. These articles are the centerpiece of the "Linking to Library Resources" guide and are targeted to patrons and library personnel alike.

Unique Links, Unique Instructions

Instructions vary according to what is required by each vendor platform to generate a stable, authenticatable URL.

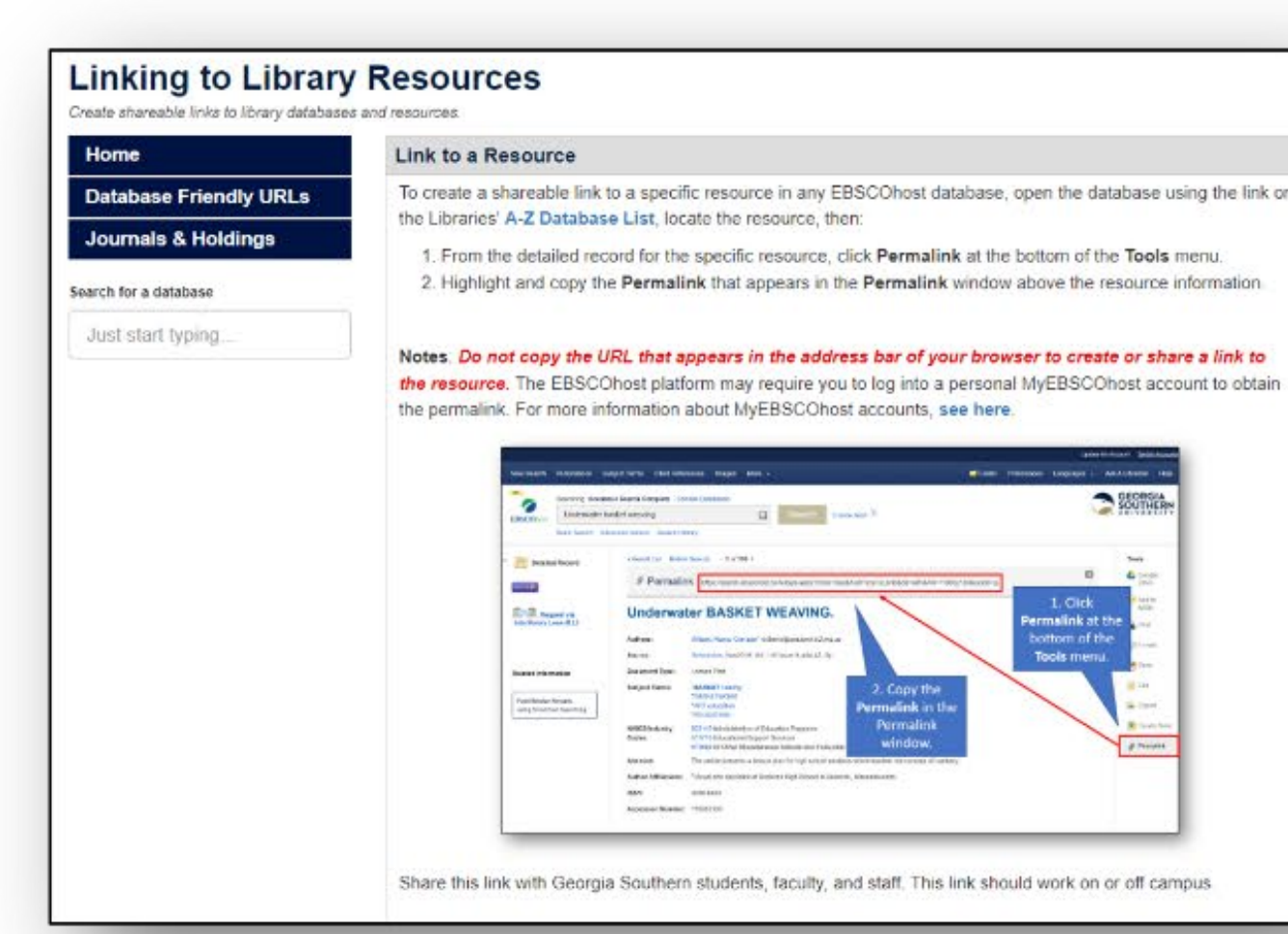
In some cases, the vendor's built-in linking tool is adequate. For many databases using Open Athens, we explain how to use the Link Generator. For databases using EZProxy, we explain how to add the prefix.

One Article, Many Databases

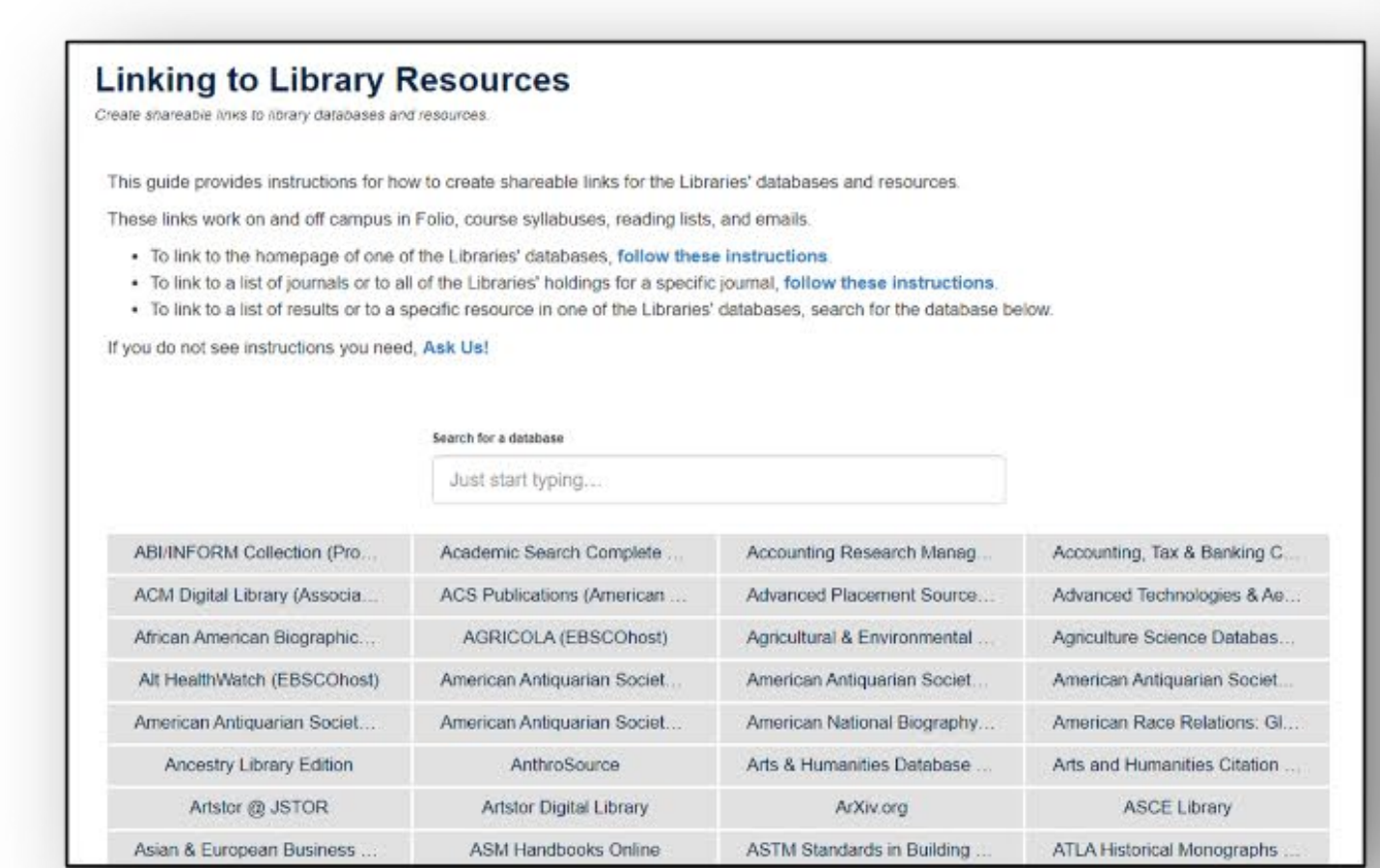
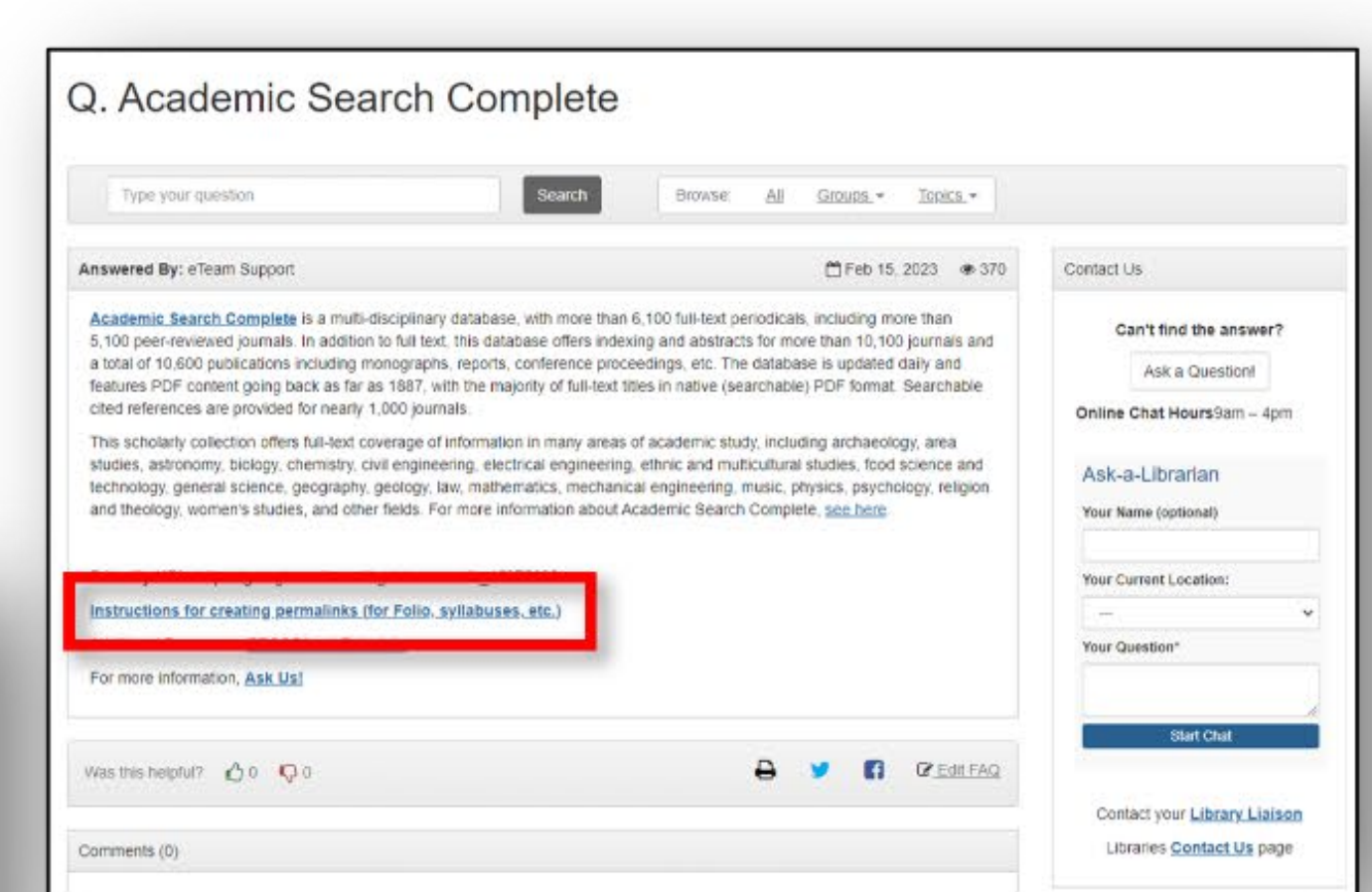
Many databases do not require a unique article or steps. For example, all EBSCOhost, ProQuest, and Web of Science databases use the same article.

Also, many articles share similar steps that can be copied... for example, any database using the address bar URL and the Open Athens Link Generator has the same instructions.



Access

Articles are accessible via the detailed description for each database. Links to the detailed descriptions appear in each database entry on our A-Z Database List. Detailed descriptions are housed on our Libraries FAQ.

Because the list of databases is long, we didn't want to use standard navigation. Instead, we created a four-column menu that appears at the bottom of the homepage and allows users to keyword search the list.