CustomLinks - Best Practices Guide

This CustomLinking Best Practices page offers several helpful Use Case scenarios for creating CustomLinks for your EBSCOhost or EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) products.

For definitions of EBSCOadmin related terms, see: EBSCOadmin Glossary

Overview

CustomLinks are links that allow users to go from a record in EBSCOhost or EBSCO Discovery Service (EDS) to almost any other resource their library has access to.

The primary goal of most CustomLinks is to take the user to a location where the full text for a given article, book, or document can be accessed. Some CustomLinks launch searches against other services or systems so that the user can obtain additional information on a topic or about a record.

This is accomplished by targeting and passing bits of metadata on a query string from an EBSCOhost record to an external site.

CustomLinks were implemented before the OpenURL standard was established, but the premise is the same.

Library administrators can control the presence of, as well as customize, their CustomLinks in many ways. One of the most commonly used methods for controlling the presence of a CustomLink is to associate it with a collection. Utilizing Advanced Functions provides an additional method for filtering links as well as augmenting the data on them.

Included in the pages that follow are additional details on the key features and categories of links, along with several Use Cases that document the “why” as it pertains to several practical examples.

Categories of Products and Services Targeted

Find step-by-step instructions for creating CustomLinks here:

Setting up EBSCO CustomLinks in EBSCOadmin

Key Features

Hundreds of pre-constructed EBSCO defined links can be applied to almost any EBSCOhost or EDS profile. EBSCO is continually adding new links to the existing list.
You can create and apply your own links as well as manage, share and control links created at the consortia level.

CustomLinks can be filtered by a collection (system or local) so that links display only on a specific subset of records rather than display on all records in a result set. (Note: local collections can also be enabled as Authority Files.)

CustomLinks can be filtered if specific data field and value criteria are met:

- If record contains a particular data field(s); i.e. if mandatory field is present.
- If specific values are present in specific field(s); i.e. if record has Full Text (FT).
- If record is from a particular database.

CustomLinks are customizable in many ways. Some examples are included below:

- You can Show or Not Show links on the following: Result List Records, Detailed Records, Publication Authority File Records (Browse List and Detailed Record).
- You can select your own Link Icon and Link text.
- You can customize the text that appears in the result list.

CustomLinks support advanced functions. Advanced functions are query string syntax that employs advanced logic for determining when a CustomLink should/should not display.

You can specify the order of FT Links, which allows you to select your CustomLink to display first and/or be the only FT Link to display. (EBSCO Discovery Service only)

The copy profile feature supports CustomLinks so that these links can be copied over from a profile within a parent account to profiles within child sites.

Collections

EBSCO supports two types of collections:

- Local Collections
- System Collections

Local Collection

A Local Collection is a list of publications (Journals or Books) that can be used for triggering CustomLinks, limiting searches, displaying messages on the user interface, and browsing as an authority.

Titles in these collections are listed in EBSCOadmin and can be selected for inclusion in a collection. Alternatively, a library may upload a collection that it created, with coverage dates and specific messages already in place – however, only those titles that are known to EBSCOadmin will load.

System Collection

Similar to Local Collections except:

- Are created by EBSCO and cannot be changed.
- Can only be used for triggering CustomLinks.
- Correspond to titles in EBSCO products as well as products from other services.
- The source of many system collections is EBSCO's Knowledge Base.

Find step-by-step instructions for creating collections here:

Local Collections - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Advanced Functions

Advanced Functions are bits of complex rules that, when added to a CustomLink, can improve the user’s chances of locating the desired content. They accomplish this by providing additional methods for controlling link display and/or manipulating the data delivered to external resources.

For example, you might add an advanced function that prevents a CustomLink from displaying unless a record is from a specific database. Where the expression \{IfEqual({DBCODE},afh)\} means: if the dbcode for record equals afh, then show link.

Functions that control link display can be added to the Mandatory Field or to the Query String Field.

Functions that manipulate data can only be added to the Query String Field (or the Base URL Field) and are generally used when the source database and the target resource contain differing metadata, missing data and/or where there are dependencies in one system that do not exist in another.

The following is the general structure of a function:

\{Function({Expression1,Expression2,Expression3})\}

There are two common types of functions:

- If Equal
- If Not Empty

Their structure and meaning are as follows:

If Equal:

\{IfEqual({Expression1,Expression2,Expression3})\}

Meaning: Return expression3 if expression1 is equal to expressions2; otherwise, return empty string.

If Not Empty:

\{IfNotEmpty({Expression1,Expression2,Expression3})\}

Meaning: If you find this field or function, use this value; otherwise, use this value.

More information can be obtained at What are the advanced functions that I can use in the Mandatory Fields of my link resolver? and by contacting EBSCO Technical Support.
**Note:** Some EBSCO defined *CustomLinks* already include advanced functions.

**Related Terms:** custom link, custom linking, custom links, customlinking, customlink, customlinks