Lean Library. Delft 48, 2611 CD
Delft, Netherlands;
https://www.leanlibrary.com/;
three modules are available
under the umbrella product of
Lean Library: Library Access,
Library Assist, and Library
Alternatives; pricing is based
partially on the number of
modules implemented; libraries
should contact the vendor for
pricing.

OVERVIEW
Lean Library “is a comprehensive
tool that reliably and seamlessly ex-
tends the library resources, services
and branding directly into the
user’s workflow” [1]. The tool is a
browser extension that redirects us-
ers to legal open access versions of
library-subscribed content or arti-
cles. One very important aspect of
the Lean Library extension is that
users do not need to start their re-
search via the library’s website as
they are usually directed to now.
Users can start from the publisher’s
website without needing to authen-
ticate, and they can still access li-
censed content.

Lean Library simplifies a li-
brary’s access to full-text resources
and avoids unnecessary paywalls.
The resource uses the Unpaywall
application programming interface
(API) to retrieve open access con-
tent and works with all major
browsers, as well as Google
Scholar, JSTOR, PubMed, and aca-
demic websites. When users search
for an article, Lean Library con-
nects to and searches their libraries’
subscription holdings and provides
access, or it “will detect the DOI
(Digital Object Identifier) for an ar-
ticle and then validate with the li-
brary on whether the user has
access through the library or an-
other location. If the user has access
at another location, the extension
will offer to take the user there” [1].
When users are doing a book
search, Lean Library “will identify
an ISBN and check for eBook ac-
cess. If the book is available elec-
tronically from the library, Lean
Library will let users know with a
helpful popup” [1].

The Lean Library icon is dis-
played as three squares on the
toolbar and is greyed out when the
tool is inactive. The icon turns
green when users search for an
item that is licensed by the library.
When users click on the icon, the
browser extension redirects them
to the library’s login page, where they
are prompted to authenticate their
credentials after which they can in-
stantly access the content. If the li-
brary does not have access to the
content, the tool automatically
checks for open-access versions,
and, if none are available, it gener-
ates a document delivery request
through the library’s interlibrary
loan service. A yellow icon indi-
cates that the institution has set up
an important message about the
item that users should be aware of.

Lean Library has a unique fea-
ture that allows users to highlight
any text on a page, right click, and
then select a specific search engine
from the context menu. The Lean
Library technical support team sets
up the connection between the re-
source and the library search
engine, which can include multiple
options. At this reviewer’s institu-
tion, the Dahlgren Memorial Li-
brary at Georgetown University,
both PubMed and a beta discovery
search tool are integrated with
Lean Library. Users are directed to
the library’s resources that have in-
formation on the topic of interest.

Currently, with no mobile de-
vice access to Lean Library, it only
works on desktops and laptops.

GETTING STARTED
Lean Library setup is quite simple,
but libraries will need to configure
and maintain the product. For
example, at Dahlgren Memorial
Library, three months were set
aside for a systems librarian to
configure and roll out the product
to patrons. Staff time and support
prior to marketing, as well as
ongoing maintenance, must be
factored in. The Lean Library has
three modules: Library Access,
Library Assist, and Library
Alternatives. The Library Access
module simplifies access to
subscribed resources; the Library
Assist module provides messages
to targeted users for information
such as library workshops or
temporary access issues; and the
Library Alternatives module
provides alternative legal routes to
full-text articles.

When Lean Library is config-
ured, users select a browser (all
major browsers are supported)
from Lean Library’s website. Af-
ter the extension has been down-
loaded, the icon will be displayed
in the toolbar and will be greyed
out until users are on a page with a citation or configuration has been completed. Users click on the icon, and the settings feature displays. Users are required to select their institutions and have the option to select an extra affiliation if they desire.

Users can also select “Skip the popup and automate my access” and “Show timer, when extension will close automatically.” The “Skip the popup and automate my access” function redirects users to their affiliated institutions’ proxy access. The “Show timer, when extension will close automatically” function shows a timer in the pop-up display from users’ institutions and can be paused if extra time is needed to review a resource. Users can change their settings at any time by clicking on the gear icon in the pop-up messages. The Welcome page provides an overview video where users can select different types of training on using this resource. Lean Library’s Frequently Asked Questions section and email support team is available for further assistance.

COMPARISON TO SIMILAR PRODUCTS

Several browser extension products are comparable to Lean Library.

- Kopernio is a browser extension available through Clarivate. Similar to Lean Library, Kopernio displays an icon that is integrated on the user’s page that indicates whether an article is available. Kopernio is free; however, there is a fee for the premium version. This tool also has a feature that is referred to as a “locker,” where users can store articles in their accounts. Kopernio was reviewed in the October 2019 issue of the Journal of Medical Library Association [2].
- Unpaywall is a tool created by Impactstory that searches for open access journals. Similar to Lean Library, this extension tool has an icon located on pages that indicates if the article is available. Lean Library uses the Unpaywall API to obtain open access articles. Unpaywall was reviewed in the April 2019 issue of the Journal of Medical Library Association [3].
- LibKey Nomad is a fee-based extension developed by Third Iron and is only available on Google Chrome. Like the others, this tool has an icon located on each page to indicate accessible articles and verifies users’ libraries’ holdings.
- The Open Access Button and Google Scholar Button are both free and help users find open access articles via a toolbar icon.

CONCLUSION

Lean Library is a browser extension that makes finding available content seamless. The “highlight any text on a page” feature is unique and offers users a quick way to access their libraries’ content for further research. The Lean Library icon is located on the toolbar and provides an easy way for users to access content. Another benefit is that this tool provides security to the library’s content because it requires user authentication with institutional credentials. Expanded access is an advantage thanks to the addition of the affiliated institution function. While Lean Library is subscription-based, its purchase improves the delivery of content in workflows; patrons do not leave the page to authenticate a journal subscription. Lean Library maintains a strong data privacy commitment, stating that no personally identifiable information is collected. Technical support is available through a Help Center link, chat windows, an administrative module, and email.

REFERENCES

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