

Library FAQ: How to Navigate Emory's Libraries

Welcome! This guide was created to answer many questions that students frequently have about accessing and using the library. Its focus is on using the library generally, not solely for academic purposes. Sections include Introduction, Navigating the Website and Finding Books, Using the Stacks, and Other Questions. It includes links and graphics to help you find library-related items. Read on to get your library questions answered!

Introduction

The Emory Library system has incredible resources that all students have access to, ranging from technology, space, workshops, expertise of subject librarians, to books themselves. There are 10 libraries that make up the Emory Library system. These include:

- Robert W. Woodruff Library
- Business Library (2nd floor Woodruff)
- Rose Library (10th floor Woodruff)
- Computing Center (Cox Hall)
- Health Sciences Center Library
- Hugh F. MacMillan Law Library
- Library Service Center (off-site storage facility for additional materials)
- Oxford College Library
- Pitts Theology Library
- Science Commons (within the Chemistry building)

Although undergraduates have access to all of these spaces and materials to various degrees, this guide mostly focuses on how to use the Woodruff Library but will refer to the others as well.

The webpage for the Emory Library system is a good place to start searching for something, but it is enormous and frequently difficult to navigate. An easier way to find things can sometimes be to type specifically what you are looking for into google (for example, “book space in emory library” or “request that the library buys a book emory”) and the right link will usually pop up.

Navigating the Website and Finding Books

The Emory Libraries website is a great tool filled with resources. From the front landing page, libraries.emory.edu, you can toggle through the various tabs and learn about these resources.

Typing a book title into the search box will open the page search.libraries.emory.edu (so you can begin your search for materials there as well). Results that may include the actual material you are searching for and anything vaguely similar. Using advanced search can give you more direct results.

Any forms in which Emory has the book should pop up, with different entries for online and physical copies (if available). Be sure to click into the format you want. The Emory library website loves opening up tab after tab which is annoying but by keep clicking you can usually get to where you need to be. This is the case with online materials, where you will keep clicking through the various tabs and screens until you are able to read it. Online materials are identifiable on the search screen with a gray box that says “Online.”

If the book is available in the system, the first step to accessing it is to check where it is. This can be done by pressing the “locate” button on the search page or by clicking into the book itself. If it is in the Library Service Center or Oxford College Library, you are able to submit a request for the book to be sent to the Atlanta campus. If listed as “Not Available,” this means that someone else has checked out the book. If you want to borrow it, you are able to submit a recall request. This is the same process as a regular request and the person who has the book checked out will have a limited number of days to return it. When submitting a request, you will be able to choose a pickup location from a variety of options, including the book lockers outside the library. You will receive an email when the book is available at your chosen location and you can go pick it up.

If a book is unavailable in the library system, you have two options: you can request an interlibrary loan or submit a materials purchase request. Interlibrary loans function through a system called ILLiad to borrow books from other library systems. This library page (<https://libraries.emory.edu/services/make-request/submit-ill-request>) has all the necessary information on how to request an Interlibrary Loan. Once you get on the site (through the above link), you press the tab “create new request” and fill out the information for the material you want. If you would like the material to be purchased for the Emory library, fill out this form:

<https://libraries.emory.edu/services/make-request/request-purchase/materials-purchase-request>. As the site says, you can also reach out to your subject librarian and ask them.

If you have gotten to this point—Emory has a physical copy of the book available (marked on the search page with a green box with the word “available”) in one of its libraries—then you must go into the stacks yourself to find the book. This is great news as the stacks are wonderful. Read on to the next section to learn how to use the stacks.

Using the Stacks

Luckily, ELSA has created a super helpful tool in an updated Library Call Number Guide. But this guide will also walk you through the process step-by-step. Now that you have found the book you want and know it is available in the stacks, the first step is to locate the call number. That’s the long string of confusing numbers and letters that describe the book’s location.

Call numbers are used to find books because Woodruff Library is organized by the Library of Congress classification system (<https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsol/lcco/>). In this system, books are organized by subject, with each large subject heading assigned a letter. In the Woodruff library, these letters are arranged alphabetically, with A (General Works) on the 8th floor down to Z (Bibliography, Library Science, Informational Resources) on the 4th floor. There are countless subheadings within each letter subject, which is why many call numbers start with more than one letter.

The call number serves as a code that tells you where the book is in the stacks. Each of those letters and numbers tells you something about the book’s location: floor, aisle, location in the aisle.

As mentioned, the letters at the beginning of the call number tell you which floor to go to. You can use either ELSA’s guide or the signs all around the library to figure out the floor. Once on the correct floor, the next set of numbers (before the period) will help guide you to the right aisle. The plaques at the end of each aisle tell you which books are in those shelves. On each floor, the shelves are organized alphabetically and the numbers always go up chronologically. Once you locate the right aisle, you begin a similar process again. Now looking at the numbers after the period, you will look at the spines of the books and will follow them alphabetically and numerically until you find your call number.

If the book is not there but the website says it is available, you can check the shelves at the end of the stacks (it may not have been reshelfed yet). If you still cannot locate it, you can ask the staff at the 2nd floor Library Service Desk.

Once you locate the book you want to check out in the stacks (congratulations!), you can check it out on the 2nd floor at either the self-service machines or the wonderful people at the Library Service Desk will help you. Be sure to have your ID!

Other Questions

Subject librarians:

Subject Librarians are incredible and very knowledgeable people who are employed in academic libraries. They have advanced degrees (such as Master's degrees or Phd's) in both Library Sciences and particular disciplines. What subject librarians want students to know is that they are here to help. Whether it be finding sources for a research project, helping you put together a bibliography, or helping find a direction for an assignment, Subject Librarians have a wide range of skills. They also make research guides (<https://guides.libraries.emory.edu/main/>) and professors may invite them to speak to your class. You can find the list of Subject Librarians here: <https://libraries.emory.edu/contact/subject-librarian-directory>. All the librarian's contact information is there, as is a spot to schedule a consultation.

Operating hours:

The easiest way to find this is by googling. This link: <https://libraries.emory.edu/hours> and this link: [PDF of Emory Library hours Spring 2023](#) do have summaries of the hours. Honestly it's super confusing and is different on weekdays and weekends and finals time and holidays so just looking it up yourself is usually best.

Accessing books outside Emory Libraries:

To our knowledge, books cannot be purchased at Emory Libraries. If you want to purchase an academic book, which many bookstores do not carry, you can frequently buy it directly from the publisher. You can also look at sites like abebooks.com or www.thriftbooks.com.

There are also many wonderful bookstores around Atlanta where you can shop for books, including Eagle Eye Book Shop (a 20min walk from campus!), Charis Books and More, Little Shop of Stories, A Capella Books, and Tall Tales Bookstore.

There exist additional resources if you would like to borrow books outside the Emory system. The Dekalb Library System is the public library system. The closest library is the Toco Hill-Avis G. Williams Library, which can be accessed on the Toco Hills shuttle route on the weekends. You can also borrow books from Emory's identity spaces, including the Center for Women, Centro Latinx, Emory Black Student Union (EBSU), the Office of LGBT Life, and the Asian Student Center (ASC). Finally, if you have a library card to any local library, you can use the Libby app to borrow ebooks and audiobooks. Happy reading!