AIMS For a better birth...

Cracking the media paywall: how to access newspaper articles for free!

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Everyone working to improve maternity services knows very well how the mass media is a really important force in the debate about the state of our maternity services (and not*always* for the positive). Our access to the newspaper coverage of birth issues is thus increasingly key to our role as successful birth activists. But have you ever seen a headline to a newspaper article that you'd really like to read, only to find that the full text is hidden behind a paywall? If this is a problem that you encounter, then this short article is intended to help you.

Did you know that many local authority library services in the UK have signed up to the PressReader platform, which allows anyone with a local library membership to access a huge number of newspapers, at no additional charge? You can use PressReader in your local library, if they are offering the service, on the library's own computers, or on your own computer or device, most likely via your local library's website, but ask the staff in your library if you need more help.

To sign up to the platform, all you need is your library card number and PIN. If you don't have a library PIN just ask at your library. This is the same PIN that you may have used to go online to renew books, or to access library computers. Once signed up you will have access to the full texts of over 7000 newspapers and magazines from around the world, including local newspapers from around the UK. There are lots of further features on the platform to explore too, which can help you keep track and share what you have read. Given these features, you might also choose to use the platform to read and keep track of articles that are not behind a paywall.

Reading a newspaper online is not quite the same as reading the article in print, granted, and I found that the platform took me a while to navigate. But once you've got a basic understanding of the site layout and functions, it is a fantastic way to crack through that paywall.

So what are you waiting for? I'd really recommend that you check out what your local library is offering its members today!

Notes

If you'd like more information about ***the company that runs PressReader***, you can look here: https://about.pressreader.com/about-us/

For access to ***academic research articles*** that sit behind a paywall, please see this AIMS Journal article: https://www.aims.org.uk/journal/item/access-to-research-scheme

For birth activists interested in how the media covers childbirth, you might want to read a recent edited collection of essays on the topic, ***Midwifery, Childbirth and the Media***, edited by Ann Luce, Vanora Hundley and Edwin Van Teijlingen (2017, Palgrave Macmillan). Find more details about the book on the publisher's website: https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783319635125