

Library Databases vs. the Web

What is a library database?

- A library database is an organized collection of electronic information that allows a user to search for a particular topic, article, or book in a variety of ways (e.g., keyword, subject, author, title). Some databases contain the full-text of articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers, as well as books. You can access library databases off-campus by logging in with your library account.
- Examples: EBSCO, CQ Researcher, ProQuest, JSTOR, Gale, Films on Demand

Can't I just Google the same information?

- Most of the information found by using Internet search engines, such as Google, is free. Library databases contain copyrighted, licensed, and proprietary information.
- Your ARCC Library pays for access to databases so that students can access the information for free.
- Information retrieved from Google may not have been evaluated. It could be inaccurate, biased, or out-of-date. You will need to carefully critique information.
- Articles found in the library databases have already been evaluated for accuracy and credibility by discipline-specific experts and publishers.

How do I access the library databases?

- On campus, access databases from the library webpage--no login is required.
- Off-campus, you will need to login with your StarID and password.

My instructor said we can't use any (or only a few) Internet sources. Can I still use the library databases?

- **Yes.** Library databases are **not** considered the Internet. Databases contain print material that has been digitized for electronic access. Still considered "journal articles," although delivery is electronic.
- Always clarify with your instructors what they actually mean when the class is told no (or few) Internet sources.

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Library Databases	The Web
When to Use	
Best for college level research. Best for credible information quickly. Best for full-text, scholarly articles.	Best for shopping and entertainment. Good for finding statistics. Good place to find background information.
Reliability	
Articles and books written by journalists or experts in a professional field. All material in database is evaluated for accuracy and credibility by subject experts. Reviewed and updated regularly.	Anyone can publish their opinions and ideas on the Internet. Internet content does not have consistently applied standards.
Accessibility	
Library database subscriptions are paid for through your tuition and state taxes. To access the ARCC Library databases from off-campus, you will need to log in with your StarID and password.	Information is often free. When information does come from a legitimate source, the user usually has to pay to access it.
Usability	
User can specify advanced search criteria; full-text, date, scholarly, format, etc. Results can be further filtered for precision. Databases usually include a <i>citation tool</i> to automatically create a citation for the article.	User must wade through a list of results often over 100,000...many irrelevant. Most web sites found on the <i>Internet</i> do not have a <i>citation tool</i> .
Stability	
Published content from journals, magazines, newspapers and books does not change. Most material remains in database for a significant length of time and can be easily retrieved again.	Web site content can often change. Web pages and sites may disappear for a number of reasons. May not be able to retrieve the same content at a later time.