Library Databases vs. the Open 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. Articles found in the library databases have already been evaluated for accuracy and credibility by discipline-specific experts and publishers.

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**. Reynolds Libraries pays for access to databases so that students can access the information for free.

Most information retrieved from Google hasn't been evaluated. It could be inaccurate, biased, or it might not be current. You will need to carefully evaluate information.

How do I access and use the library databases?

Go to the *Reynolds Libraries* home page at http://library.reynolds.edu and select **Databases: Articles** from the *Research* dropdown menu. There's also a **Databases** shortcut link in the main search box area on the homepage. When you click on a database link from **off-campus**, you will be prompted with a *Virginia's Community Colleges* login screen. Login with your **My Reynolds username and password**.

My instructor told our class 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.** They contain print material that has been digitized for electronic access. Always clarify with your instructors what they actually mean when the class is told no (or few) Internet sources.

Need more help? Refer to the guide on the back of this page.

Library Databases vs. the Open Web - A Comparison

Library Databases	The Open, Free 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.	• No standards in place. Anyone can publish their opinions and ideas on the Internet. • Much of the information found on the free Web is NOT evaluated for accuracy and reliability. • Use the ABCD's Checklist to evaluate resources (authority, bias, content, design).
Accessibility	
• Library database subscriptions are paid for through your tuition and state taxes. • To access the Reynolds Libraries databases from off-campus, you will need to logon with your *My Reynolds* username and password.	• Information is often free. • When information does come from a legitimate source or publisher 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 *citation tool* to automatically create a citation for the article.	• Lack of subject focus results in irrelevant. • User must wade through a "grab bag" of thousands to millions of results. • Most web sites found on the *Internet* do not have a *citation tool.*
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.