



Library Databases vs. Google

Last updated 8/31/2012.

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). Library databases contain thousands to millions of records or articles. Some databases contain the **full-text** of articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers as well as books while other databases contain only **citations** - or - **citations & abstracts**. A database can be **multidisciplinary** (cover a variety of topics) or **subject specific** (e.g., business, health). Library databases can be accessed from off-campus by logging in with your *My JSRCC* account and are available 24/7.

Can't I get the same articles found in a library database by using Google?

In most cases, no. Most of the information retrieved from the **open web** by using Internet **search engines**, such as Google, is free. **Library databases** contain **copyrighted, licensed, proprietary** information that is not free. JSRCC Library pays yearly subscription fees for its databases just like it pays yearly subscription fees for its print journals, magazines, and newspapers.

I don't know how to use the library databases. What's wrong with just Googling it?

There's nothing wrong with using Google or another **search engine** to find information on the web. Just keep in mind that most of the information retrieved from the **open web** hasn't been evaluated. It could be inaccurate, biased, or it might not be current. Also, the authors of web sites might not have the same credentials as the authors of articles found in the **library databases**. You will need to more carefully evaluate information retrieved on the **open web**. All of the articles found in the library databases have already been evaluated for accuracy and credibility by discipline-specific experts and publishers.

How do I access and use the library databases?

The **library databases** can be accessed from the library's home page by clicking on **Databases A-Z** or **Databases by Subject** under the *Find Information* section. If you are accessing the databases from off-campus, you will be prompted to login with your *My JSRCC* username and password. If you need help in using the databases, schedule a one-on-one research consultation with a librarian or sign up for a free library workshop.

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** use the **Internet** as a delivery system but they are not considered *the Internet*. In most cases, your instructor means that they don't want you using web sites or web pages found on the **open web** through Internet **search engines** such as Google. Most of the **published** resources found in the **library databases** are not available on the open web. Always clarify with your instructors what they actually mean when the class is told *no (or few) Internet sources*.

What are some of the other differences between library databases and Internet search engines?

See the chart on page 2 and 3 of this handout.

Library Databases	Internet Search Engines
Types of Information Retrieved	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarly journal articles Popular magazine articles Newspaper articles Reference book articles (e.g., directories, encyclopedias) Books No sponsors or ads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few free scholarly journal articles and books. Popular web sites (e.g., Wikipedia, Facebook) Commercial web sites (e.g., eBay, Amazon) Educational web sites (e.g., JSRCC, VCU) Government web sites (e.g., Library of Congress, Virginia.gov) Statistics (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau) Organizational web sites (e.g., American Psychological Association) Current news & information (e.g., CNN) Email, chat (e.g., Gmail, Facebook Messenger, Google Talk) Many sponsors and ads.
When to Use	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best for college level research. When you need to find credible information quickly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best for personal information needs including shopping and entertainment. When you have time to more carefully evaluate information found on the open web.
Credibility / Review Process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 and publishers. Reviewed and updated regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of control allows <i>anybody</i> to publish their opinions and ideas on the Internet. Not evaluated (for the most part). Need to more carefully evaluate web sites for bias, accuracy, and completeness. Many sites are not updated regularly and can become outdated.
Cost / Accessibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library database subscriptions are paid for through your tuition and state taxes. To access the JSRCC Library databases from off-campus, you will need to logon with your My JSRCC username and password. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most information found through a search engine is free. Library databases cannot be accessed through <i>search engines</i> or the <i>open web</i>. Many web sites found through Internet search engines contain <i>licensed, proprietary</i> information and require you to logon with a user account. You must already be a member or pay for a subscription in order to access the material from these web sites.

Library Databases (cont'd)	Internet Search Engines (cont'd)
Usability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The organization and various search capabilities of library databases allow users to search for and retrieve focused and relevant results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less ability to search for and retrieve precise results using search engines like Google. Need to wade through a “grab bag” of results.
Constancy / Permanence / Stability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Published</i> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
Citing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many databases include a <i>citation tool</i> that will automatically generate an APA or MLA style reference for the article you select. You may still need to “tweak” this citation but these tools serve as a good starting point for citing your articles in a particular format. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most web sites found on the <i>open web</i> do not provide a <i>citation tool</i> or an already formatted APA or MLA style reference for the web pages on their site. You will need to start your citation from scratch using APA or MLA style manuals or handouts from your instructor or the library.

Library Database & Internet Terms

Abstract - A brief summary of an article or book.

Citation –Reference to a specific work (book, article, etc.) which fully identifies the source. An article citation includes the author/s name, article title, periodical title, volume number, issue number, date, and article page numbers. A book citation includes the author/s name, book title, publisher, place of publication, and publication date.

Copyright - The legal protection granted to authors, composers, and others to allow them to control the reproduction and distribution of their works. Almost all print and online books and periodical articles are copyrighted. You can generally make one copy of any article for personal use but you should not make copies of entire books as this is a violation of the law. If you have a question about copyright, ask the Library Reference Desk.

Full-Text – When the entire text of a book, journal, magazine, or newspaper article is available from the library database for viewing, downloading, and printing.

Internet – A worldwide network of interconnected computers that enables millions of users to access and share information on service networks such as the World Wide Web and e-mail.

Library database - 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). Library databases contain thousands to millions of records or articles. Some library databases contain the full-text of articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers as well as books while other library databases contain only citations - or - citations & abstracts. A database can be multidisciplinary (cover a variety of topics) or subject specific (e.g., business, health). Library databases can be accessed from off-campus by logging in with your My JSRCC account and are available 24/7.

Licensed – A sales agreement or contract between a library or group of libraries and a database company specifying the terms of access to the database and use of material contained within the database. Libraries and other institutions and individuals wishing to access these databases need to pay a yearly subscription fee. If you have a question about licensed library databases, ask the Library Reference Desk.

Open web – Information that can be accessed for free on the web or without having to login. Most web sites and pages that are retrieved through search engines, such as Google, are considered the open web.

Search engine – A search engine is a huge database (collection) of web page files assembled automatically by a computer program that is used to search the Internet. Google and Yahoo are popular examples of a search engine. When you perform a search using a search engine, such as Google, the engine scans its index of web page files and matches the search terms you used with those terms found in the texts of web pages within the engine's database. When you are using a search engine, you are not searching the entire Web as it exists at the moment; you are actually searching a portion of the web, captured in a fixed database created at an earlier date.

Peer-Reviewed – Peer-reviewed articles (also known as refereed articles) are scholarly journals articles that have been reviewed and approved by a board of experts (the author's *peers*) in a discipline-specific field prior to publication to ensure that the research or information is valid and reflects good scholarship. Many databases will give you the option to limit your search to peer-reviewed journal articles.

Proprietary – Refers to a database and its contents being owned by the database company. Libraries and other institutions and individuals wishing to access these databases need to pay a yearly subscription fee.

Published – An individual or group's written work that is prepared and issued in print or online format for public distribution or sale.