

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). Many databases contain the full-text of articles from journals, magazines, and newspapers, as well as books.

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**. The Rainbow District School Board 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 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 and use the library databases?

Go to <https://virtuallibrary.rainbowschools.ca/> and click on the **Database** tab. From the database page you can search all databases by clicking the **Access the Gale Research Portal** option at the top of the page. If you search from home you will require a password – visit your library for a password list.

My teacher 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 Web - A Comparison

Library Databases	The Web
When to Use	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Best for academic research. ● Best for credible information quickly. ● Best for full-text, scholarly articles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Best for entertainment, and personal use. ● Good for finding statistics. ● Good place to find background information.
Reliability	
<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. ● Reviewed and updated regularly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anyone can publish their opinions and ideas on the Internet. ● Use ABCD's to evaluate resources (authority, bias, content, design). ● Internet content does not have standards.
Accessibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Library database subscriptions are paid for by Rainbow District School Board. ● To access library databases from home, you will need to logon with your password (see the library for a list). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information is often free. ● When information does come from a legitimate source or publisher the user usually has to pay to access it.
Usability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of subject focus results in irrelevant. ● User must wade through a "grab bag" of results often over 100,000. ● Most web sites found on the Internet do not have a <i>citation tool</i>.
Stability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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 especially if saved in your account. 	<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.

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Adapted from: *Library Databases vs. the Web*, Reynolds Community College Library, <http://libguides.reynolds.edu/content.php?pid=81682&sid=612301>, November 2013.