

**Library Databases vs. the Open Web**

#### What is a library database?

A library database is an organized, online collection of information that allows a user to search for a specific topic or resource in a variety of ways (e.g., by author, keyword, subject, title). Databases contain journal, magazine and newspaper articles, many available in full-text, eBooks and streaming videos. Resources found in the library databases have already been evaluated for accuracy and credibility by subject-specific experts and publishers.

#### Can’t I just Google the same information that is found in library databases?

In many cases, no. Much of the information retrieved from Google hasn't been evaluated for credibility. It could be inaccurate, biased, or it might not be current. You will need to more carefully evaluate information found on the open web. Very few free scholarly journal articles are found on the open web when compared to scholarly journal articles available through the library databases.

Also, most of the information found by using Internet search engines, such as Google, is free. Library databases contain copyrighted, licensed information. Your tuition and state taxes pay for access to these databases.

#### How do I access the library databases?

Go to the *Reynolds Libraries* homepage at [https://library.reynolds.edu](httpsL/library.reynolds.edu/) and select **Databases** from the *Research* dropdown menu. 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 **multifactor authentication (MFA)**.

#### 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 copyrighted, licensed resources that have been digitized for online 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 comparison chart on the back of this page.**

****

*Created by Reynolds Community College Libraries. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.*

*Last updated 7/13/2023.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Library Databases** | **Open Web** |
| **When to Use** | |
| * Best for college level research. * Best for finding credible information. * Best for finding full-text, scholarly articles. | * Best for entertainment, shopping and social networking. * Best for finding recent statistics. * Great place to find background information on a topic. |
| **Reliability** | |
| * Articles and books written by journalists or subject experts in a professional field. * Resources in database collections are 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 open Web is NOT evaluated for accuracy and reliability. * Use the 5 W’s checklist to evaluate resources (Who, What, Where, When, Why). |
| **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 login with your *My Reynolds* username and multifactor authentication (MFA). | * Information is often free. * When information does come from a legitimate publisher, in many cases the user will need to pay to access it. |
| **Usability** | |
| * Can limit search to full-text, scholarly and recently published resources. * Databases usually include a *citation tool* to automatically create a citation in APA or MLA style for the selected resource. | * Filter options not as intuitive. Must wade through a “grab bag” of thousands to millions of results. * Most websites found on the open web do not have a *citation tool.* |
| **Stability** | |
| * Publishedcontent from journals, magazines, newspapers and books does not change. * Most material remains in a 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. |

**Library Databases vs. the Open Web - A Comparison**