“But My Teacher Said I Couldn’t Use the Internet!”

Alameda County Library’s Online Databases vs. the Internet

The Internet is a collection of links, connected to each other but not overseen by anybody. Anyone with a computer can publish on the Internet. The databases subscribed to by Alameda County Library are only delivered by Internet technology. The online databases replace many of the books formerly found in the library’s reference collection and the information they contain is not available on the open Internet. The databases were selected by librarians because their content is provided by reliable publishers.

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<th>SUBSCRIPTION DATABASES</th>
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| CONTENT                | • Produced by respected and professional companies, including publishers of books, magazines and journals.  
• Has been checked by editors  
• Includes full text of many articles that the library no longer has in printed format. | • The good, the bad, the ugly and the crazy stuff that's out there |
| UNIQUENESS OF INFORMATION | • Most of what you find on the databases is not available elsewhere unless you pay for it. Access is not available through Google or the other search engines.  
• Some publishers are no longer providing information in a printed format. The only way to get the information now is through an online database. | • Some excellent information, including some information that is not available anywhere else.  
• Users must sort through the information and determine what is reliable. |
| HOW CLOSE TO THE TOPIC ARE THE RESULTS? | • Generally, the results you get are very relevant. | • Search engines have their own rules about what comes up first, often influenced by advertising dollars.  
• Publishers of websites can manipulate their pages so that they come up high on your search, even if the content isn’t what you want |
| SEARCHING              | • Use flexible methods, allowing you to do things like limit the date from the main search page | • Uses search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing.  
• You need to use advanced searching to do most of the things the databases offer in general search. |
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| PURPOSE | • The information provided in databases was written by reporters, researchers, and others. Some of it was written to inform, some of it to amuse, and some of it because scientists need to publish their work. • Publishers published it to make money, after determining that the information was reliable enough to stake their reputations. | • Websites are also made for a variety of purposes, including to inform, to persuade, or to make money. Sometimes websites are put up as a hoax or joke. |
| NUMBER OF RESULTS | • Depending on the search, there can be a lot. For example: A search on the periodical database MasterFILE Complete for “endangered species” found 6,030 full-text articles, sorted with the most recent articles first. | • Often too much to search through. For example: A Google search for “endangered species” found 73,200,000 hits. Who wants to sort through all that? |
| COST | • The Library paid for these database subscriptions so that you have access to them free of charge. You can use them in the library or from home with a library card. | • Mostly free—but not always. |

**Bottom line:** these databases are not the same as the Internet; they only use the Internet as a delivery system. If your teacher states that you can only use one Internet source, the Library’s databases should not count as that Internet source.

Alameda County Library staff can come to your class and show you and your teachers what’s available to you and some good ways to use the databases. Contact your local branch for more information.

You will need a library card to use these databases outside the library. Details about getting a library card* can be found on our Library Card Guide, http://guides.aclibrary.org/librarycard

*Alameda County residents may sign up online for an eCard providing immediate access to online products and to place holds. Residents of other CA counties will need to come in-person to get a regular card for online access.