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Dare to know

Library Databases vs. Internet Search Engines

Library Databases (e.g., EBSCOHost, Infobase, or JSTOR)	Internet Search Engine (e.g., Google, Bing, or DuckDuckGo)
Overview	
• Searches in online collections can be limited with filters such as subject, title, author's name, date range, or keyword.	• Free and open information that is on the limitless World Wide Web. • A complex series of algorithms will typically rank results by popularity, one's previous search history and/or location, or a site's advertising decisions rather than the quality of the information.
Types of Retrieved Information	
• Scholarly journal articles • Popular magazine articles • Newspaper articles • Reference book entries • eBooks • Streaming video • The databases will provide either full-text articles, an abstract, or a citation. • Many databases feature suggested citation styles according to the relevant academic field.	• Popular websites (e.g., Wikipedia, Instagram, etc.) • Commercial websites (e.g., Amazon, Chegg, etc.) • Educational websites (e.g., Kansas State University, Fort Hays State University, etc.) • Government websites (e.g., National Archives, Kansas State Library) • Statistics (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau) • Professional association websites (e.g., American Historical Association) • Current news and information (e.g., CNN, Fox News, etc.) • Email and messaging (e.g., Gmail, Facebook Messenger, etc.)

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Creditability / Authority	
• Materials created by experts in a professional field. • Subject experts and publishers peer review resources for accuracy and creditability, then recommend them for inclusion into the database. • Results are typically more neutral. • Reviewed and updated regularly.	• The decentralized nature of the Internet allows anyone to publish opinions and ideas. • Potential for bias, inaccuracy, overt or hidden agendas, and incompleteness due to haphazard standards of evaluation. • Websites may not be updated regularly or could be allowed to lapse. • Many websites may not be academically creditable.
Cost / Accessibility	
• Academic materials found on databases may not be accessible elsewhere free of charge. • Library database subscriptions are funded through tuition dollars and state funding. • All enrolled students have the ability to access databases.	• Search engines are free to use. • Many websites contain licensed proprietary materials that require one to create a user account. Subscription fees for full access may apply.
Usability	
• Library databases are designed and organized to allow users to search for and retrieve relevant and focused results. • Databases use controlled vocabularies relevant to the chosen academic field. • Databases are advertisement free.	• Search engines will produce less focused or precise results, forcing the user to sift through potentially billions of options in a variety of formats. • Most websites will use their platform for ad revenue.
Constancy / Permanency / Stability	
• Content published in journals, books, and newspapers does not change. • Materials remain in the databases for a significant length of time, and can be retrieved multiple times.	• Website content can change, often without editorial notes documenting revisions. • Webpages and sites and their content may disappear with no warning.