

Databases vs. The Internet

Databases are online resources provided to you as a student at the University of North Alabama. Access (whether on campus or off campus) to these resources is paid for by the UNA Libraries, the University, or the Alabama Virtual Library (AVL). The databases include thousands of articles from periodicals (journals, magazines, and newspapers), reference books, and other reliable information sources. Databases are part of the hidden or invisible web. This means that they are NOT searchable using search engines like Google.

The Internet is a worldwide network of computers. The free or open areas of the web can be searched by search engines like Google. The Internet can be a great resource and help you find exactly what you are looking for, but you must evaluate any website you use to ensure the information is accurate. It is easy and cheap to put something up on the web. It is up to you - the reader - to use critical thinking skills to determine the validity, authorship, timeliness, and integrity of what you find. Information can be copied and falsified or made available with omissions and errors -- intentional or accidental.

Databases

- “ Are NOT the same thing as a Search Engine or the Internet. (Databases are accessed using an Internet Browser.)
- “ Are well indexed and have a number of searching capabilities.
- “ Contain information from reputable publishers (of books, magazines, newspapers, & journals) so the information found in a database can be considered accurate and reliable.
- “ Contain scholarly articles in peer reviewed journals.
- “ Include thousands of magazines, journals, newspapers, and reference books.
- “ Are NOT free. UNA pays a subscription fee for the databases so students, faculty, and staff will have access to them.

The Internet

- “ Includes websites for entertainment, shopping, opinions, and research.
- “ Does NOT have a form of “quality control” (anyone anywhere can create a webpage and put anything on it).
- “ Can contain outdated information. Always check to see when a webpage was last updated.
- “ Does NOT provide free access to everything.
- “ Can be searched using search engines (Google, Yahoo!) that search the free or open web. These search engines often find pages that are self-published or published by businesses or other organizations with motives to get you to buy something or believe a point of view.
- “ Does NOT have everything. (Books and other items may still be under copyright, preventing their appearance online. It also costs (a lot) of money to digitize information and place it online.)
- “ Is not fully indexed.

When do I use the Internet and when do I use a database?

Use **databases** when you want:

- Magazine or newspaper articles
- Journal articles/Scholarly research articles
- Information from reputable publishers
- Biographical information
- Encyclopedia articles

Use the **Internet** when you:

- Are willing to evaluate the website
- Want to go to a specific website
- Want government information, such as tax forms or statistics
- Want to find other websites