

# Library Databases vs. the Open Web

## What is a library database?

A library database is an organized collection of electronic information that allows a user to search for a topic, article, or book in a variety of ways such as by keyword, subject, author, title. Some databases contain the full-text of article from journals, magazines, and newspapers, as well as books. Full-text means it reproduces the entire article online, not just some parts of the article. **Articles found in a library databases have already been evaluated for correctness and reliability by experts and publishers.**

## 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 (proprietary means relating to an owner or ownership). Most information retrieved from Google has not been evaluated. It could be wrong, bias, or it might not be current. You will need to carefully evaluate information found on the open web.

## Magnolia Database

Magnolia is a project paid for by our state legislature. Mississippi provides an online research database for public schools, public libraries, community college libraries, and universities in our state. The database is called MAGNOLIA. Go to <http://magnolia.msstate.edu>. The password is magn0897. You do not need a password if you are using a computer in a public school or public library.

Library Database	The Open, Free Web
<b>When to Use</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best for college level research.</li> <li>• Best for credible information.</li> <li>• Best for full-text, scholarly articles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best for shopping and entertaining.</li> <li>• Good for finding statistics.</li> <li>• Good place to find background information.</li> </ul>
<b>Reliability</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Articles and books written by journalist or experts in a professional field.</li> <li>• All materials in a database is evaluated or accuracy and credibility by subject experts.</li> <li>• Reviewed and updated regularly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No standards in place. Anyone can publish their own opinions and ideas on the Internet.</li> <li>• Much of the information found on the free Web is NOT evaluated for accuracy and reliability.</li> <li>• Use the <u>ABCD's checklist</u> to evaluate resources (authority, bias, content, design)</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Library database subscriptions are paid through your tuition and state taxes.</li> <li>• To access the Magnolia if you are not at a public school or public library, you will need a password.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information is often free.</li> <li>• When information does come from a legitimate source or publisher the user usually has to pay to access it.</li> </ul>
<b>Usability</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User can specify advance search criteria; full-text, date, scholarly, format, etc.</li> <li>• Results can be further filtered of precision.</li> <li>• Databases usually include a <i>citation tool</i> to automatically create a citation for the article.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of subject focus results in irrelevant.</li> <li>• User must wade through a "grab bag" of thousands to millions of results.</li> <li>• Most web sites found on the <i>Internet</i> do not have a <i>citation tool</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Stability</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Published content form journals, magazines, newspapers and books does not change.</li> <li>• Most material remains in database for a significant length of time and can be easily retrieved again.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Web site content can often change.</li> <li>• Web pages and sites may disappear for a number of reasons. May not be able to retrieve content at a later time.</li> </ul>