

Electronic Resources vs. Search Engines

Ave Maria University Library

Many students and scholars are rightfully cautious toward information freely available on the Web through search engines such as Google. However, in addition to this free content, the Internet also contains subscription databases (such as JSTOR and ProQuest) which contain electronic versions of copyrighted material published in print books, journals, and magazines. The AMU Library subscribes to dozens of these electronic resources (available at <http://inside/library/resources.asp>) for students, faculty, and staff to use. The following chart highlights some of the differences between these two types of materials.

<u>Electronic Resources</u>	<u>Search Engines</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Available only to individuals or institutions that pay for a subscription.- Contain collections of journal and magazine articles, dissertations, reviews, abstracts, and full length books.- Content is reviewed, going through both the initial publishing process and the indexing process to be selected for a particular database.- Many scholarly journals included (with the same content as the print version).- Information is often organized by subject and type of resource.- Information is stable over time.- Contain much scholarly material that is not freely available through a search engine (such as copyrighted books, journals, and magazines).- Content often takes time to go become available as it goes through the screening process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Free to anyone with a computer and Internet access.- Provide access to just about anything, including personal opinions, intentionally deceptive information, and advertisements in addition to some scholarly resources.- Content is not reviewed or screened for accuracy or legitimacy.- Some scholarly journals are mixed in among billions of other web pages, frequently making it difficult to narrow results and find relevant material.- Information is not generally organized.- Information changes over time. Websites are modified and disappear completely over time.- Most material in libraries is NOT currently available through search engines.- Provide up to the minute information instantaneously.

Both Electronic Resources and Search Engines can be effective tools for research. However, the differences between them make each of them ideal for different types of projects. Search Engines are wonderful tools for finding information about the news, organizations, or individual opinions on everything from movies to sports to politics. There is also tons of useful information freely available on the Web from government agencies, colleges and universities, and various non-profit organizations. However, for scholarly research and papers, the Library's Electronic Resources (in addition to print books and journals), are generally the best choice.

For more information on the differences between Electronic Resources and Search Engines, or for some tips on more effectively searching both of these types of materials, please visit the reference desk in the Library. We would be more than happy to help you!

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