Databases

A **Database** is an organized collection of information, usually pertaining to a particular subject.

Think of databases as huge electronic filing systems. They must be highly organized for people to easily find the information they need.
There are many kinds of databases. The most common type you will encounter in the library is an online periodical index, which points you to articles published in magazines, journals, and newspapers.
Each year millions of articles are published in periodicals, most of which are indexed in periodical indexes. Evans Library will own many - but not all - of the periodicals included in those indexes.
What's in a Database?

Periodical indexes allow you to search for citations to articles in popular magazines and scholarly journals. Sometimes these indexes have the complete or "full text" of articles as well.
Indexes cover all sorts of subjects. Multi-disciplinary indexes contain articles about new trends, opinions, and information for the non-specialist. You may be familiar with one of the multi-disciplinary periodical indexes, such as Academic Search Complete, ProQuest, or WilsonWeb.
Periodical indexes are one of the best places to find information when writing a research paper, seeking data, or looking for answers to questions, because:

- you can access most of them through the Web
- they index information which often has gone through an editorial review process
- they cover a variety of subjects
- they are structured for finding information more precisely
- they offer citations to the popular magazines and scholarly journals that have articles on your topic
Which database?

Choosing an appropriate database or periodical index is an essential part of research.

How are you going to choose among those available from Evans Library?
Library databases organize particular types of materials. Some index citations for government documents, conference proceedings, book reviews, or magazine and journal articles. Others, like the library catalog, focus on a particular collection. Knowing what type of information you are looking for will make your selection easier.
Many library databases specialize in a particular subject. There are databases for education, business, anthropology, engineering, and architecture - virtually every academic discipline! Other databases are more general or multi-disciplinary, indexing popular and scholarly periodicals from a wide variety of topics.
If you have completed E-LEARN's process of "Defining a Research Topic," you will be better prepared to select appropriate databases.
For articles about:

**Censorship**

*Use: multi-disciplinary database*

ProQuest

**Separation anxiety and retirees**

*Use: psychology database*

PsycINFO

**Rights of individuals on the Internet**

*Use: legal or government index*

Lexis-Nexis Academic
Databases available to you are listed on the Library website.

And the List Goes on...
You may also want to ask one of the reference librarians to recommend the best databases for your topic.

To contact a reference librarian, call: 321-674-8086

You may also use our Ask a Librarian service.
Some Library databases are listed below.

- Academic Search Complete
- ACM Portal
- Aerospace Database
- ASFA Aquatic Sciences and Fisheries Abstracts
- BIOSIS Previews (includes Biological Abstracts)
- Business Source Complete
- Emerald Insight
- Engineering Village
- ENGnetBASE
- Environmental Impact Statements
- Environmental Sciences and Pollution Management
- FirstSearch
- Gale Databases
- IEEE Xplore Digital Library
- Journal Citation Reports
- JSTOR
- Lexis Nexis Academic
- Literature Resource Center
- MathSciNet
- MEDLINE
- Mergent Online
- ProQuest
- PsycINFO
- Zoological Record
For a complete description of and link to each database, go to the A-Z Databases page.
Subject Searching

Most periodical databases organize their records using a list of approved subject headings. This allows you to find all the articles about your topic under one term.
How do you find the approved subject headings?

Some indexes provide a list of subject headings. This list may be called a subject guide or a thesaurus.

If you search for a word that is not in the index, it may suggest an approved subject heading you could use.
In this example, a database contains 1,712 articles about the Internet. If you looked for articles using the words **Information Superhighway**, this database would direct you to use the subject heading **Internet**.
Keyword Searching
Another way to find subject headings is to start with a keyword search.
A keyword search allows you to locate articles that include your keywords within the title, abstract, or subject heading areas.
Let's say you searched using the keyword **free speech**. Look at the following record to see where the database found that word.

- **Authors**: Joyce-Hasham, Mariyam.
- **Title**: Web offence.
- **Subject Headings**: Internet, **Freedom of Speech**, White Supremacists, Censorship
- **Abstract**: As racist and extremist views proliferate over the Internet, governments are trying to determine whether Internet **free speech** has gone too far, or whether the extremist rhetoric posted on the Internet is a small price to pay for a medium that encourages expression.
Notice that there are subject headings that you could enter as keywords to help you find additional articles.
Use keyword searching to:

• start your research
• identify the subject headings used for your topic
• find specific information (a fact, date, or name)
• find every occurrence of the words you enter in that database
Searching using a single keyword may be easy, but most of your topics are probably more complex than a single word can describe.
For more subject-specific research, take a look at the Evans Library's Research Guides.