



How to Use Online Databases

All you need is:

- ✓ **Internet Access**
- ✓ **Palliser Regional Library Patron Card**
- ✓ **PIN (usually the last 4 digits of your phone number)**

What's a Database?

Put simply, a database is a collection of information organized in a way that makes it easy to search and use. Palliser Regional Library subscribes to **over 30 online databases**, and more are being added every year. Our databases include articles from magazines and newspapers, encyclopedias, directories, almanacs, yearbooks, research reports, and many other reference sources.

Many of these articles are **full text**, which means that the entire text of the article is available through the database. Sometimes only the **index and abstract** of the article is available (meaning the title, author, date, and other information, as well as a short description of what the article is about).

Why not use a book instead?

Books are a valuable resource and Databases will not be replacing them any time soon. However, databases have several advantages over books:

Currency of Information – Books take time to be written, published, and shipped to your library. By the time a book gets to your

library, the information in it can already be a year old. For some subjects (History, Literature, Music, Arts, etc.) up-to-date information may not be necessary, and sometimes not even desirable. However, for subjects like Science and Technology, having the most current information can be essential. Databases are updated regularly, and the most current information available can usually be found there.

Ease of Searching – It can take time to read through a book to find the information you are looking for. A database can find relevant information quickly by searching for keywords.

Breadth of Information – Each database contains hundreds or thousands of articles. You will find more information on your topic than you would in a single book, and the information can come from many points of view.

Availability – One has to physically obtain a book in order to use it. As long as you have Internet Access, Online Databases are available 24/7 without ever leaving your home.

Why not just search Google?

Google is a good Internet search engine, and you can find a lot of great information on the Internet. However, there are some things to keep in mind:

Relevant Information – Google searches over 4 billion web pages. A Google search can yield hundreds or even thousands of results. Going through these results to find the information you are looking for can be almost impossible. Databases can be subject specific and only include high-quality sources of information, therefore reducing the number of results you have to go through.

Reliable Information – Anyone can author a website. Websites can come and go within hours. Ensuring that the content on a website is accurate and up-to-date and that it will still be there tomorrow is difficult if not

impossible. The information in databases has been carefully evaluated and selected and is a trustworthy source.

Advertising – Web sites can bombard you with annoying pop-ups, and even Google has advertising adjacent to its search results. The Online Databases have already been paid for by the library for its patrons' use and therefore do not need to display advertising.

Offensive Content – There is no way to control the content of websites, and children searching the web may inadvertently come across a page with offensive or age-inappropriate content. Our Online Databases include several databases for children which contain age-appropriate content at a suitable reading level.

Copyright – You will not find the same type of material searching Google. Right now, Google only has the capability to search free content on websites. Online Databases have been paid for and therefore can grant access to magazine and newspaper articles which would otherwise be inaccessible due to copyright.

Accessing the Databases

Go to the **Palliser Regional Library Homepage** at <http://www.palliserlibrary.ca/>

Click on the link **Magazines and More** on the menu to the left. This will take you to a page where the databases are arranged by **subject**.

Choose a **subject** that you are interested in or would like further information on. Not all subjects have databases yet. If this is the case, the page will say **No Databases Available**. Return to the subject list and try again. Also note that some databases cover more than one topic, and are therefore listed under more than one subject. To display all of the databases **alphabetically** rather than by subject, click the link at the bottom **Display Databases Alphabetically**.

Each database has a brief description with it to help you decide whether or not it will be useful to you. Once you have found a database that will meet your information needs, there are two different ways to access it:

1. **At the Library:** When you are in most libraries, all you need to do is click on the database name, and you will be directed to the database.
2. **From Home or another location outside the library (also some rural branch libraries):** Instead of clicking on the title, click on the link beside the database **Out of Library**. You will then be directed to a screen where you will have to enter your library barcode number and PIN.

Searching the Databases

While each database has a somewhat different 'look', the basic organization and search strategy will be similar for all databases. Enter a keyword on the topic you are interested in. The database will perform the search and then display the results.

By selecting items, you can create a **list of items** which you can then **print or e-mail** to yourself or someone else for future reference.

Some results will be available in **full text**. If this is the case, you can **read the article** on the screen, **print the article**, or **e-mail the article** to yourself or someone else.

Some articles will not be available in full text. You can find out if these articles are available through Palliser Regional Library by searching the **Catalogue**, or request these articles through **Inter-Library Loan**.

If you are having trouble using a database, try using the **Help** feature of the database. If that does not work, then ask a librarian to help you.