



## Guide to Online Catalog vs. Database

This guide is a comparison of the differences between an online catalog and a database.

### What is the Difference Between an Online Catalog and a Database?

When you are doing research on a topic, it is important to understand the differences between a library online catalog and a library database. Review the table below to help you understand the differences.

	Catalog	Database
How can I access it?	From the library Web site	From the library Web site
What does it contain?	<u>Information about:</u> Books Journal Titles Government Documents Videos, CDs Other materials	<u>Information about:</u> Articles citations and abstracts Full-text articles (only some databases) Electronic books (full text)
When do I use it?	To get information on the physical materials the library owns on a particular topic	To obtain online abstracts or full-text articles on a particular topic

### What if My Assignment Asks for a Print Article?

Information comes in many forms such as print, electronic formats, videos, CDs. Some instructors and professors require you to have “print” article(s) for your assignment. Review carefully the requirements for your assignment and the considerations below to help you decide if you have a “print” article. Keep in mind: articles that appear in a database probably also appear in a “print” format.

- Did you find the article by accessing an electronic database\*?

\*Databases function like an index in the back of a book; you look for a term in the index and are pointed to a particular page in the book to read about the topic. In a database, you type in your term and it points you to articles written about your topic.

- If you are permitted to download an article from an electronic format, for example, a full-text article from WilsonSelect database, this is equivalent to a “print” article as the article would have also appeared in a “print” journal.
- If you are **not** permitted to download an article in any electronic format, then you must use “print” resources to find your article.

**If you need any assistance in making choices about databases or print resources, please consult any of the reference librarians. Reference Librarians staff the South Service Desk at FLITE.**