

DATABASES? GOOGLE? MINERVA? WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

It's easy to search the Web. We all use Google or Yahoo or another search engine when we need quick answers for basic information needs. But is a Web search engine like Google the best place to go when doing academic research? Decidedly not!

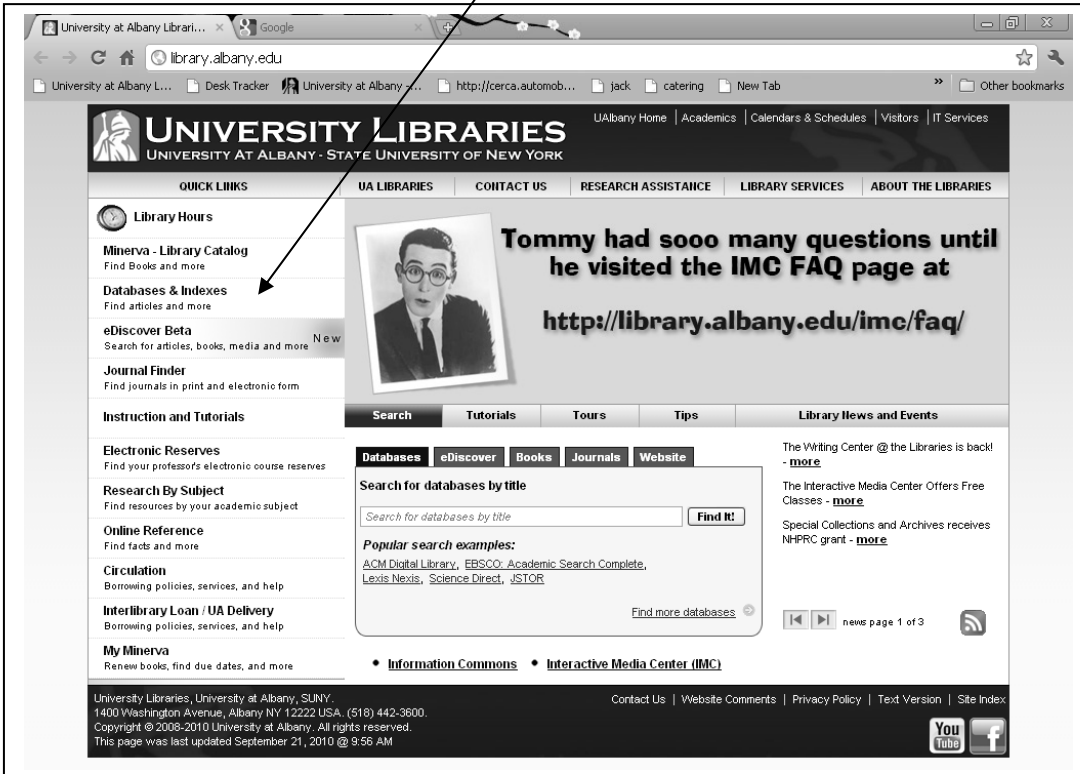
So where can you go for information? Libraries provide **databases** that contain information about an incredible number of information sources. Depending on the scope of the database, it might include:

- articles from scholarly journals (these are found in most databases)
- articles from popular magazines
- books and chapters in books
- papers given at conferences
- statistics
- and other types of information

Some even include the full articles, which can be very convenient.

Why bother with a database? Most of the sources are ones that have been written by experts in the field, and may have gone through a process of being vetted by other experts. Your professors will expect you to use these scholarly sources when doing research.

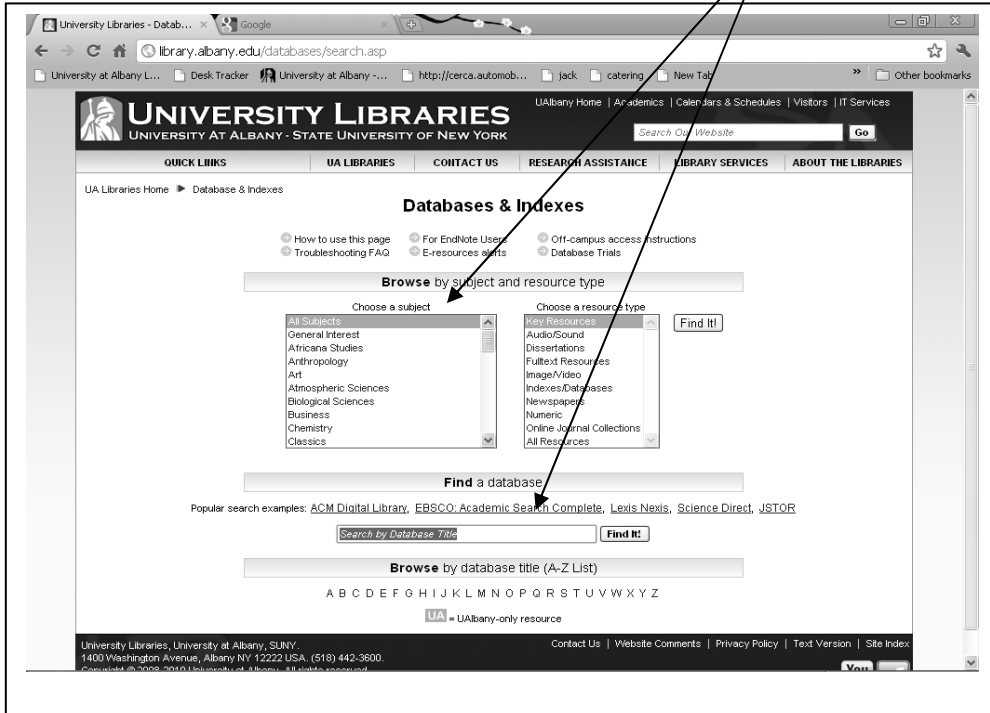
How do you find a database? Select the "Databases & Indexes" link from the Libraries' Website



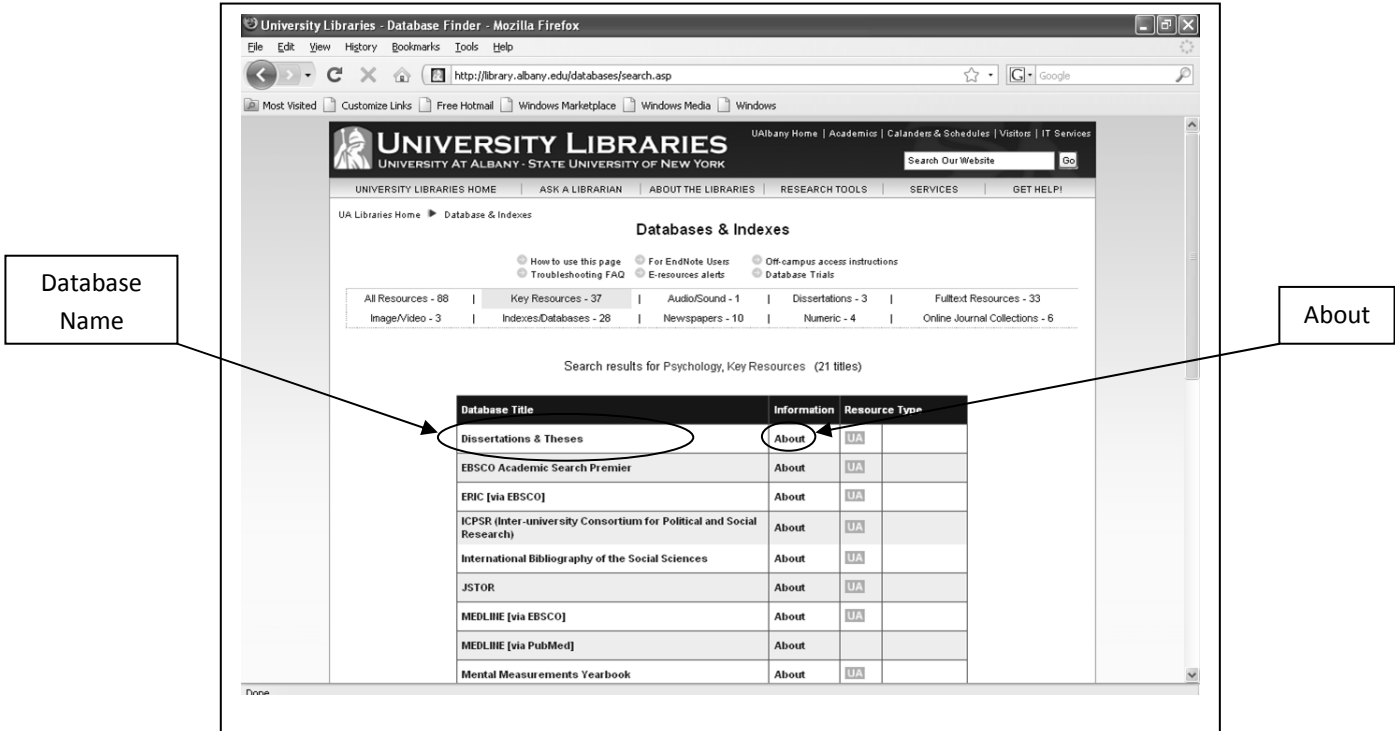
The screenshot shows the University at Albany Libraries website. The navigation menu includes "QUICK LINKS", "UA LIBRARIES", "CONTACT US", "RESEARCH ASSISTANCE", "LIBRARY SERVICES", and "ABOUT THE LIBRARIES". Under "QUICK LINKS", the "Databases & Indexes" link is highlighted with a black arrow. The main content area features a search bar, a "Databases" tab, and a search box for databases by title. A prominent banner for the IMC FAQ page is also visible.

You'll notice you don't need to know the name of the database you want to use (we offer hundreds!). Just choose the subject area you are interested in, and keep the default "Key Resources" in the second drop-down box.

Note: for many research projects in your first or second year, **EBSCO Academic Search Complete** is a good database to use. You can easily click on it right from this page.



You'll then get a list of databases. Click on the name of the database to enter it, or click on "About" for more information on the scope of the database.



Librarians can assist you with your searches, and you can also find more information at <http://library.albany.edu/usered/eltools/index.html>

So why shouldn't I use Google? Search engines search the Web. There are some great resources on the Web, but also lots and lots of poor ones. As you know, anyone can put anything on the Web. You have to carefully evaluate information found through Web searches. And very little of it has gone through any sort of review process by experts in the field, as scholarly journal articles do.

Are there any exceptions? Have you heard of Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com/>)? Google Scholar searches the academic or scholarly literature. It is similar to one enormous database, but because there is so much in it, you might not find it as user friendly as some databases. Also, it may ask you to pay for articles that you have free access to through the University Libraries. But you might want to give it a try. Just don't confuse it with the generic Google!

So what is Minerva? Minerva, available from the University Libraries' Web site, is our online catalog, which lets you know what books, journals and magazines, videos, CDs, government documents (and more) that we own or have access to. You don't use Minerva to search for articles on a topic, though. That is what databases are for.

Questions? Ask a librarian! You can do so in person, via IM, e-mail or phone. Easy contact information is at <http://library.albany.edu/contactus.html>