

## The Library or the Internet? What You Don't Know Really Could Hurt

Library Resources	Internet Resources
Many articles in the libraries' electronic databases are scholarly and have gone through a review process.	Most of the billion or so Web pages have not been evaluated or reviewed. A paper by a Nobel-prize winner can be pulled up alongside a paper written by a high-school student on the same subject.
Online databases generally provide sophisticated subject, title, and author search capabilities that are much more elaborate than those available through Internet search engines	Often keyword searches are all that's available via an Internet search engine, which limits the user's ability to weed out irrelevant sources.
Books and other library resources have been classified by subject, so once you've identified your subject, it's often easy to find other works on the same topic.	Internet resources are usually not organized, and even subject directories such as Yahoo have classified only a fraction of what is available.
Collection development policies in libraries provide for extensive review to determine that resources reflecting a variety of viewpoints on issues are selected and purchased.	Web pages may or may not contain personal viewpoints or organization viewpoints that you will need to examine very carefully for objectivity, authority, and timeliness.
Libraries make sure that you have access to the most up-to-date possible sources when necessary, as with almanacs.	No one's weeding the Internet, and sites with seriously outdated information are still available.
Cataloguers have long understood that users are likely to misspell key terms or not understand the importance of searching with synonyms and so provide users with <i>See also</i> reference aids.	On the Web, a typo could mean never reaching your source. Searching for "fiber optics" may eliminate British "fibre optics" documents. And if you spell it "otpics," you may really be in trouble.
Libraries feel strongly about their users' rights to privacy. Records of users' circulation history are not kept once a book is returned to the library.	It's likely that information about your visit to the site will be collected by an advertiser, or at the very least a cookie will be left on your machine.
Libraries have no personal stake in what information you choose to access.	Web sites are often sponsored by advertisers who have a definite interest in getting viewers to look at certain information (and to avoid other sources).
Libraries provide access to important older resources as well as to recent ones.	Most information on the Internet is less than fifteen years old.
Your right to access whatever information you need is generally guaranteed.	The Communications Decency Act of 1996 mandates filtering of Internet sites that contain information deemed harmful to minors. You might be working on a filtered system and not even know it.