

# Transitioning to College: Helping You Succeed

<http://www.transitioning2college.org>

## Librarian's Tips on Choosing the Right Database

College libraries usually have many more databases to offer than high school libraries. For example, students at most colleges and universities in Ohio can choose from over 80 databases. This is because college libraries support the research needs of faculty and graduate students, as well as undergraduates. With this many choices, how do you know where to begin?

Well, think about databases as being divided into two types – **general** and **subject specific**.



**General Databases** allow you to find articles from a wide range of magazines, journals, and newspapers. Some of the articles in general databases will be very long and very technical. Some of the articles will only be a ½ page long. This usually depends on the source of the article (whether it is a scholarly journal or a magazine).

General databases (like *Academic Search Premier* and *Masterfile Premier*) are useful when you aren't doing in-depth research. For most topics you will be researching as an undergraduate, a general database is a good place to start.

**Subject Specific Databases** are very focused on one particular subject area or discipline.

For example, *Biological Abstracts* provides information on articles found in about **7,000** life science journals. It's hard to imagine, isn't it? Seven thousand journals published just on the life sciences.

There are also databases for American history (*America: History and Life*), for medicine (*MEDLINE*), for nursing (*CINAHL*), for engineering (*Compendex*), for cancer research (*CANCERLIT*), for education (*ERIC*), for psychology (*PsycINFO*)...well, you get the idea!

As you go through your college career and are required to do more advanced research, you will want to explore these subject databases. Each one may look a little different from the other, but most of the basic features are the same.

And remember, you don't have to be taking a course in a certain subject in order to use a subject specific database for your research. If you are doing a paper in an English class on the use of steroids by high school athletes, you can look for articles in *ERIC* or in one of the medical databases. You'll find useful information, and your instructor will be pleased that you have moved beyond the Web into the world of scholarly research.