Different Resource Formats Infographic – Text Version

Library Catalogs

A library catalog is a listing of everything a library owns. You can look up print materials, such as books, and where to find them on the shelves by call number.

Use books when:

- you’re looking for a lot of information on a topic
- you need to put your topic in context with other important issues
- you need historical information
- you're looking for summaries of research to support an argument

Reference materials

Examples of reference materials include encyclopedias, dictionaries & thesauri, almanacs, maps, and directories. Reference materials are mostly used to "refer" to quick, basic information.

Use reference materials when:

- you’re looking for background information on a topic
- you're trying to find key ideas, important dates or concepts

Library Databases

Databases typically contain articles rather than entire books, though some databases are collections of electronic books. Most databases are subject specific. It helps to choose one that relates to your topic before starting your search.

Use a library database when:

- you're looking for full-text journal, magazine, and newspaper articles
- you're looking for scholarly journals

Periodicals

Periodicals, such as newspapers, magazines, and journals, are published frequently. Libraries typically have some subscriptions to periodicals in print. However, many periodicals can be found in databases.

Use a newspaper when:

- you're looking for current events, editorials, commentaries, and opinions

Use a magazine when:

- you're looking for opinions on popular culture and general articles written for people who are not necessarily specialists in the topic area

Use a journal when:

- you're doing scholarly research and looking for peer-reviewed articles