

FRESHMAN LIBRARY ORIENTATION

CLASS NOTES FOR DAY FOUR

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE INTERNET? It is a “global system of **inter**connected computer **net**works” that enables you to access information stored in files on computers all around the world.

THE INTERNET, THE WEB, AND GOOGLE ARE ALL INTERCHANGEABLE TERMS—RIGHT? Wrong. The Internet (initially a government network that dates back to the 1960s) is the physical computer network itself. The Web (an abbreviation of World Wide Web—invented in the early 1990s) is the term used to describe the system that links hypertext documents that are accessed using the Internet. Google (created in the late 1990s) is one of many programs that search the Web.

WHAT MIGHT YOU FIND IN GOOGLE SEARCH RESULTS? You’ll find files that are accessible on the free (or open) Web. Those files could include papers written by a 4th grade class, travel information, someone’s personal web page, health information from a government site, propaganda of a hate group, a newspaper’s web site, etc. Some of those files are perfect for academic research—but some of them are not.

WHAT WON’T YOU FIND IN GOOGLE SEARCH RESULTS? You won’t find information that is stored in files that are not accessible on the Internet (for example, many books are not yet accessible in this way—at least not at this time). You also won’t find files that are somewhere out there on that computer network (the Internet) but that are stored in such a way that a program like Google cannot find them.

YOU HAVE ACCESS TO MANY FILES THAT GOOGLE CANNOT FIND. This is because the school pays for that access through online subscription databases. A database is “a collection of information that is organized so that it can be easily accessed and maintained.” Reference book articles, newspaper and magazine articles, pictures, and more can be found in the online databases for which the school pays yearly subscription fees for you to have the right to access. Google cannot find what is in these databases because access is limited (by password) to those who have paid for the right to use them. Universities like Yale and Harvard spend millions of dollars per year for online subscriptions. Why would they do that when there is so much out there on the Web for free?? Having access to quality information is essential to the research process. Institutions like Yale want their students to have access to MORE than just what’s available out there for free—and so do we!

SO . . . SUBSCRIPTION DATABASES—GOOD? FREE WEB—BAD? Absolutely not!!! What you’re looking for will determine what’s best. There are definitely times when a free-web site will be exactly what you need—but the databases will very often be the better choices for academic research. Be open to them—don’t just dismiss them because Google is what you’re used to using.

A FEW FACTS ABOUT THE MTHS SUBSCRIPTION DATABASES. The library subscribes to 19 different databases; the most comprehensive and one of the largest of them is Student Resources in Context with millions of articles. All of these databases are accessible anywhere there is Internet access—in the library, in the classroom, at home, etc. Logins and passwords are necessary when accessing the databases outside of school (because access is limited to those who have paid for the right to use them).