Introduction to Electronic Databases

**OBJECTIVE:** Upon completion of the *Electronic Databases* component, you will be able to:

- (With completion of other components) Compare the differences and similarities between the Internet, Electronic Databases, and Print Resources.

What is a database?

A database consists of organized pieces of information placed into records.

- For example, a file cabinet could be considered a very basic form of a database. The cabinet contains folder files (records) that contain papers (pieces of information). The folders and pieces of information are placed in some sort of order for easy access.

What is an electronic (online) database?

- Most online databases contain articles and citations to articles. You have access to subscription databases through Sullivan University. Subscription databases are usually fee-based and contain articles made available through an agreement with the original publishers. Sullivan University has purchased the rights to access these databases. The contents of these databases are not available to the general public.
- Online databases are usually web-based; they are accessed through the web, but do not search the web for their results. When you perform a search in an online database you are searching the database’s listing of articles, abstracts, and in many cases, the full text of articles.
- An electronic database is not considered to be: a “regular” web page, e.g., a web page from an individual or institution; or a web search engine, such as Google® or Bing®.

What are some of the benefits of electronic (online) databases?

- Speed with which a search can be completed:
  - You can simply enter a few search terms and instantaneously retrieve a number of results.
- Remote access:
  - You can often access databases off-campus as well as on-campus with an Internet connection.
- Multiple access points in a search:
  - You can combine search terms in a search instead of looking for one search term at a time.
- Currency of articles:
  - Electronic databases are updated frequently, providing the most current information.
What are some of the disadvantages of electronic (online) databases?

- Spelling errors:
  - If a search term is misspelled, you will not find results.
- Too much information:
  - Without using a proper search strategy, you may retrieve too many results with irrelevant information.
- Unfamiliarity with an electronic database:
  - If you do not know how to use the electronic database, it may be difficult to retrieve relevant results. It is always helpful to read the HELP page.

Types of electronic (online) databases

- There are many, many different types of electronic databases in the world today, including statistical databases, image databases, and more.
- Most databases are either full-text and/or bibliographic in nature:
  - The full-text databases contain complete articles.
  - The bibliographic databases contain citations (this indicates where the article came from) and/or abstracts (a short summary of the article).

Electronic (online) databases provide many functions for the user, including basic and advanced searching. At Sullivan University, you have access to number of unique electronic databases.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: