What is a database?

A database is a collection of information that has been brought together, and structured so that the user can search it. Publications that the library previously purchased separately have now been grouped together in digital packages that can be searched in many different ways.

Each database is unique. The BMCC Library Faculty have selected over 100 databases on many different subjects and have contracted with the publishers of the databases to offer these resources to our students, staff and faculty.

Why are they essential research tools?

A very large portion of the material available through our database page is unique, and is not available on the “Free Web.” You are given access to it because you are enrolled at BMCC.

How do I select one?

It really depends on what you are looking for. The library website has lists of databases by broad subject areas. If you are trying to do a class assignment, start with a database that is listed for that subject. If you are not sure, start with a large multidisciplinary database like Academic Search Complete.

How do I search a database?

1. Select a database from one of the lists under “Find Articles” on the library website.
2. If you are off campus, you will be prompted for a user name and password. This process is described in a separate guide.
3. Look for the search box – put your keywords into it and click search.
4. Look for a way to limit your search to full text.
5. Most databases will offer a chance to limit your search to “scholarly” or “peer reviewed” articles. Depending on the assignment, this may be important.
6. If the resulting set is too large, consider adding a second search term to the search box.
   Example: “poverty and race” will create a set that includes both terms
7. Once you have found an article that you would like to keep, open it. There will usually be buttons for emailing the article, or saving to a flash drive.
8. If you don’t find anything, check your spelling. If your spelling is correct, contact the library for help. You may need to select a different database: http://lib1.bmcc.cuny.edu/help/askalibrarian.html