# Finding information online: a simple guide to choosing sources [Video Transcript]

The internet is an amazing resource: you have access to billions of pages of information from across the world, all as a result of a quick Google search.

But how useful is the internet for your academic studies? When should you use the internet, and when should you choose Library resources? These are some tips to help you make a wise choice…

## Scope: the internet.

When we talk about the internet we mean webpages, forums, blogs, online repositories and other sources of information that are freely available online. The internet is global and covers a huge range of information: shopping, news, discussion forums, hoaxes and jokes, organisations and public information sites.

## Scope: Library resources.

Library resources are specially selected to support students and staff at the University. There are fewer resources than on the internet, but these are likely to be more relevant for academic study, and will usually be of high quality.

They are academic in nature, and include books, journal articles, encyclopedias, and dictionaries across the range of subjects taught, studied and researched at the University.

You can find these by searching using NELSON, the library search tool. Sources are often organised in databases, many of which can be searched using NELSON. You may get more accurate results by searching a database directly.

## Reliability: the internet.

Anyone can post anything on the internet: this means that you need to be aware of the potential problems with using these resources. For example, you need to find out who is providing the information, and why? This will help you to identify potential bias in the source.

You need to assess if the information is up to date, or out of date, and if this is important for your needs?

## Reliability: Library resources.

Library resources are selected and bought from specialist suppliers. This means they are likely to be more reliable and academic in nature. You still need to assess the suitability of the source for your purpose.

## Search: the internet.

It’s easy to search the internet using Google, but does it search everything? The deep, or invisible web is part of the Internet that run of the mill search engines just can’t reach. It includes dynamic content, file formats and websites that cannot be indexed by search engines.

You also need to be aware of search engines which create ‘filter bubbles’ based on your previous searches and preferences, which means that your search results may exclude things that are relevant.

## Search: Library resources.

There are various ways to find Library resources. You could start with your module reading list, which will link straight to relevant resources.

You can start with NELSON. The library search tool enables you to search lots of resources at the same time. If you need to do a more detailed search, you may wish to try a subject-specific database. Whichever resource you use, take some time to learn the advanced search options, which allow you to tailor your search, and your results, to find the most relevant sources.

## Summary: using online resources.

To summarise, when using online resources think about what you need to find, does the source of the information matter, and where are the best places to go to help you find that information?

If you need any more help contact your academic librarian, or Learning Development.