Google vs Google Scholar vs Library Databases

Google
- Searches the entire indexed web
- Searching is free
- Google algorithm ranks relevance for you
- Useful for official and primary sources such as government websites

Google Scholar
- Indexes a wide range of scholarly literature
- Searching is free
- Easy to use if you’re familiar with Google
- Google algorithm ranks relevance for you
- Can set up library access links in settings

Library Databases
- Searches specialized academic databases
- Full-text articles are free to students & faculty
- Content organized & maintained by experts
- Can limit searches by a variety of criteria
- Easy to identify peer reviewed articles

- Hard to determine the credibility of sources
- Results contain free & sponsored links
- Content not organized by experts
- Hard to find and identify scholarly sources

- Can’t search by subject area or material type
- No full-text access to most articles
- Very limited filters
- Content not organized by experts
- No easy way to identify ‘peer reviewed’ sources

- Not as easy to navigate for new users
- Not all databases share the same interface
- Need to choose the appropriate databases to search
- Need to learn how to use limiters for best results

McMaster University Library