Library Databases – Introduction
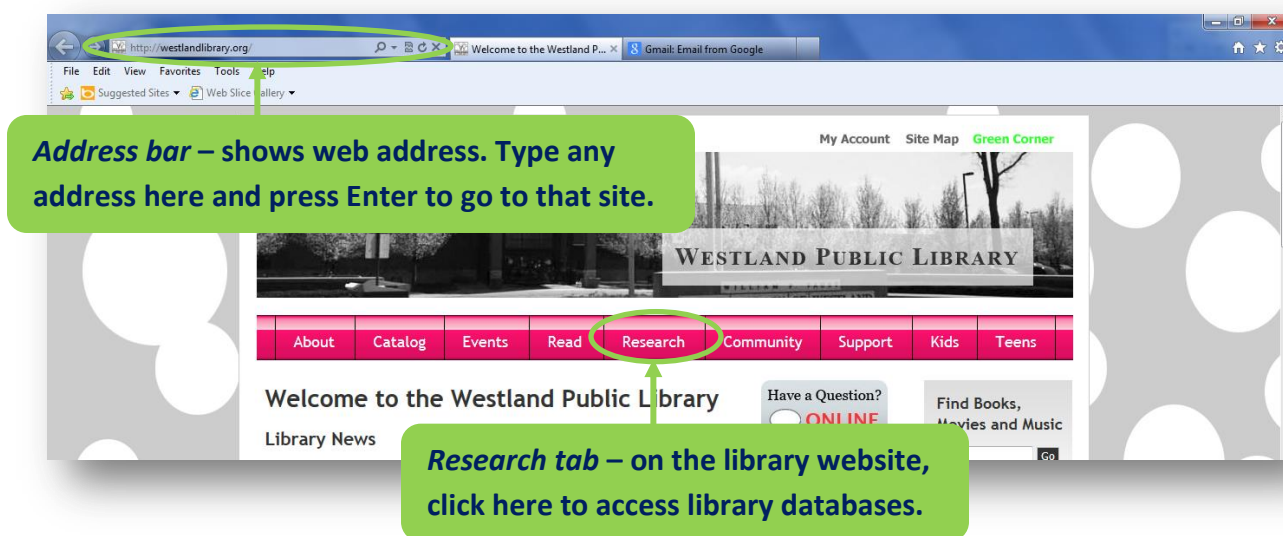
Library databases are premium online resources that the library licenses for research, test preparation, or homework help. In this activity, you will learn how to access our library databases and how to search them for information.

To begin exploring our library databases, you will first need to navigate to the library website using an internet browser. Examples of internet browsers are Microsoft Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, and Google Chrome.

Double-click on a browser icon on the desktop to get started.

If you are completing this activity at one of our library computers, the library website will be the first thing you see when you open the browser. If you are completing this activity at home, you will have to navigate to our website by typing www.westlandlibrary.org into your browser's address bar.

Address bar – shows web address. Type any address here and press Enter to go to that site.

Research tab – on the library website, click here to access library databases.

The pink tabs at the top of the library website allow easy access to different categories of library information and resources. Since our library databases are used primarily for research, we have made them available under the **Research** tab.

TIP: The library's website provides access to the library catalog and your library account; a complete events calendar of upcoming library programs; links to online research databases, test prep resources, and homework help; downloadable eBooks and audiobooks, special pages for Teens and Kids, and much more!
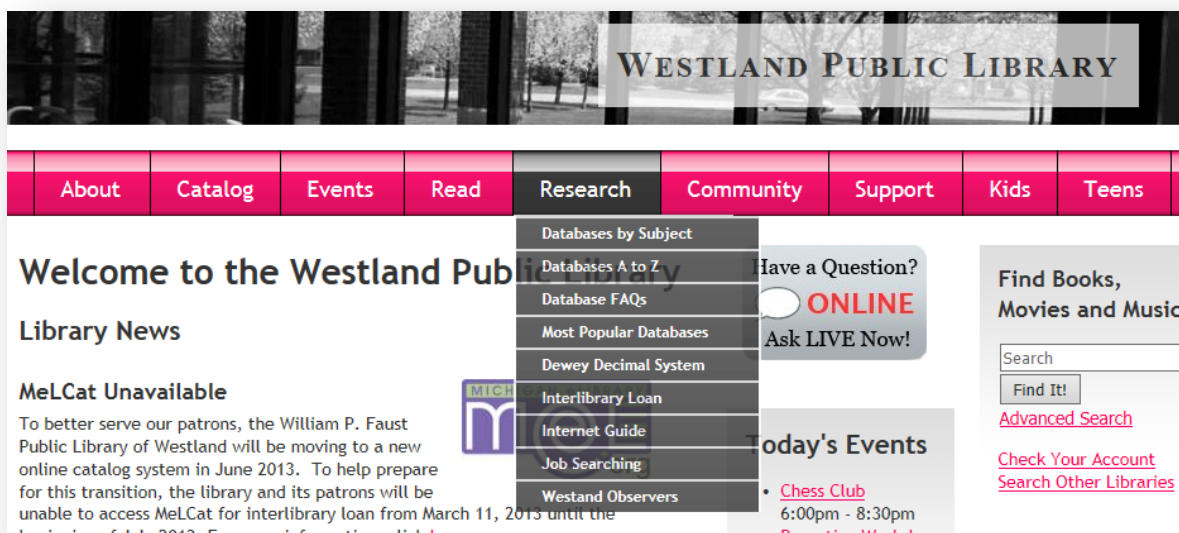
Library Databases – Scavenger Hunt

This activity is designed to give you experience navigating to and searching library databases for information. We will ask you to find information from the library website and from a variety of databases. Record your answers below.

The scavenger hunt begins at our library website: www.westlandlibrary.org

Part I – Database FAQs

Roll your mouse over the pink tabs at the top of the library homepage. A menu related to each tab will appear, as in the example below:

1. Roll over the **Research** tab and then click on **Database FAQs** in the menu to navigate to our page on frequently asked questions about databases.
2. Scroll down to the first question in the FAQs.
3. What is a Research Database? _____
4. True or False (circle one): A database is the same as a website.
5. How do you access one of our databases from outside the library? _____
6. If you have any questions about our Research Databases, who should you call? (HINT: it's not Ghostbusters.) _____

If you'd like to learn more about what you can do with library databases, please ask a librarian at the Reference Desk. We're happy to help!

TIP: Most of our databases can be accessed from outside the library from any computer with an internet connection. You will need your library card to log in.

Westland Public Library ● 6123 Central City Parkway ● Westland, MI 48185 ● 734-326-6123

Part II – Databases by Subject

Now that you've learned a bit more about databases in general, let's take a look at some of the databases the library offers.

1. Go to the top of the page and roll over the **Research** tab again. This time, click on **Databases by Subject**. This will take you to a listing of all of our databases, organized by category.
2. Near the top of the page, below the large in-library ![icon] and at-home ![icon] icons, you will see a variety of subjects that appear as pink links (Arts, Biography, Books, etc).
3. Read through the subjects and pick one you would like to look at now. Write down the name of the subject you choose to explore: _____
4. Click on the subject you've chosen. This will take you down the page to the databases under that subject. You'll see the names of databases listed in bold with in-library and at-home icons to the right.
5. What are two databases in your subject area?
_____ and _____
6. Read the description of the first database. What topics does the database cover?
_____
7. In the gray bar with the name of the subject you've chosen, you'll see a **back to top** link at the right. Click on this link to return to the top of the page and the list of subjects.

Feel free to take this time to explore more than one subject. Our databases cover a wide variety of topics that may interest you.

Part III – Biography & Genealogy

Next we are going to navigate to a specific Research Database, take a look around, and search for information. Return to the list of subjects at the top of Databases by Subject page.

1. Click on **Biography** or **Genealogy** in the list of subjects. This will take you to our **Biography and Genealogy** databases.
2. Click on the appropriate icon (in-library ![icon] if you are at one of our computers, or at-home ![icon] if you are outside the library or using our Wi-Fi network) for the **Biography in Context** database. If you use the at-home link you will be prompted to enter your library card information in order to continue.
3. You should now be on the main page of the Biography in Context database. Take a look around the page. You will see some featured stories and public figures of note.
4. Locate the **Search** bar in the top right corner of the page. The search function will allow you to search for a person by name, occupation, nationality, birth place, or death place.
5. Select **Birth Place** as your search type by clicking on Birth Place above the search box. Type in "Michigan" (without quotation marks) in the Search bar and click **Search Birth Place**. This will return a list of people in the database who were born in Michigan.
6. Scroll down the page to view the search results. Write the name of a person born in Michigan:
_____
7. Click on the link to the person's name (the link will be dark blue and underlined) to reach a list of articles related to that person. See if you can find the person's place of birth (city or town). You may have to click into more than one article to find it. Write down the birthplace here:
_____

Since databases provide a wide variety of resources and types of information, each database will have its own look, navigation, and search features (this combination of look, navigation, and search features is known as the database's *interface*).

Part IV – LearningExpress Library

The **LearningExpress Library** allows access to learning resources rather than research information. It provides interactive practice tests, tutorial courses, and ebooks designed to help test takers succeed on academic or licensing exams.

1. Return to the library's **Databases by Subject** page. You should be able to find it in the tab to the left of the Biography in Context tab at the top of your browser window.
2. Choose **Career Prep** or **College Prep** from the list of subjects. This will take you to our **College and Career Prep** databases. Click on the appropriate icon (in-library or at-home) for the **LearningExpress Library**. You may have to click over to the next tab to the right to see LearningExpress – it should load in the tab that you used to view Biography in Context.
3. Take a look around the LearningExpress homepage. Along the left side of the page, you'll see a number of categories called Learning Centers. Which Learning Center do you think might be useful to you or someone in your family? Write down the name of the Learning Center below: _____
4. Click on the Learning Center you've chosen. You will see blue categories that can be expanded by clicking on them. What are two categories of resources within this Learning center? _____ and _____
5. Click on one of the categories to expand it. What is one of the subcategories listed? _____
6. Click on that subcategory to bring up available tests, courses, and ebooks. Name one of the tests, courses, or ebooks listed: _____
7. Click on the test, course, or ebook listing for more info. How long is the test, course or ebook? _____ minutes or pages (circle one)

To use LearningExpress to prepare for the GED, college or grad school entrance exams, or career-specific tests like the Civil Service exam, you should register for an account. This will allow you to add multiple tests and tutorials and track your progress.

TIP: The easiest way to create a LearningExpress Library account is from our public computers. Navigate to LearningExpress Library from our databases page and click the **Register** button on the LearningExpress homepage. Be sure to remember the username and password you create so you can get back into your account later.

Part V – Chilton Library

The final database we are going to explore contains automotive repair and maintenance information. It is called **Chilton Library**.

1. Return to the library's **Databases by Subject** page.
2. Go to the top of the page and roll over the **Research** tab again. This time, click on **Databases A to Z**. This will take you to a listing of all of our databases, organized alphabetically.

3. Click on the letter **C** to jump to databases starting with that letter. Read the description for Chilton Library. What years of vehicles does the database cover? _____
4. Click on the appropriate icon for **Chilton Library**.
5. Using the drop-down menus on the Vehicle Selector, choose 2006 Toyota Prius and click on the **Select** button. There will be three categories of information listed in the vehicle selection results to the right. What are they? _____ , _____ and _____
6. Click on **Repair**. See if you can find the standard location of the Prius's Vehicle Identification Number plate. You will have to use the plus (+) and minus (-) buttons to expand and collapse the menus on the left side of the screen. (HINT: check out the General Information & Identification section. You will need to Click to view A typical VIN in order to find the answer.) Where is the VIN located on the Prius? _____
7. You'll notice that not all vehicles listed in Chilton have Repair, Maintenance, and Bulletins/Recalls available. Try another vehicle and see what type of information you can find about it. Once you make changes in the Vehicle Selector you may have to click on the Select Vehicle button at the top of the page to refresh the information displayed. Write down the year, make and model of the second car you searched for: _____

Congratulations, you've completed our database scavenger hunt! Feel free to continue exploring the databases on your own, and ask a librarian if you have any questions.

As you can see from the databases we accessed in this activity, library databases have a wide variety of topics and interfaces and each has a specific purpose. It's not always easy to find exactly what you're looking for on your first attempt to navigate a database. With persistence and practice, you can learn how to get the most out of these premium resources.

If you are having trouble or you're not sure where to start, please ask a librarian for assistance. We're happy to help at the Reference Desk, by phone at 734-326-6123, or by email at questions@westlandlibrary.org.