

## **What's in a Database?**

So you've been thinking about a research project. You know that the University of Delaware Library has tons of resources available to you, and you know that you can find relevant sources for your research within a database.

But what is a database? What can you find in there? And, why does this matter to me?

When a scholar, someone like your professor for this class, writes an article, they will typically submit it to a journal to be published and distributed to the larger academic community. Similar to a magazine, one issue of a journal contains a collection of several articles - all written by different scholars.

All the articles are vetted by an editorial board of experts in that field. New issues of a journal are published periodically, such as once a month or multiple times a year.

There are thousands of individual journals, all related to specific disciplines. Once published, journals can be read either in an electronic copy or in print.

Articles from thousands of journals are then grouped and organized together within databases created and run by companies, called vendors, that then sell those databases to libraries.

A database is an organized collection of records stored in an electronic format. You might recognize some of these vendor names because you've already been using those databases.

Not all databases are equal and will vary in scope, years covered, how articles are organized and search functionality. But the important thing to remember is that every database operates and functions in a similar way. That means that once you have an understanding of how to search within one, you can search within them all.