



Web Directories: a Selected List

A Web Directory is a list of links to Web pages. Web Directories should not be confused with Search Engines. Search Engines use a computer program to find pages with your search words in them. A Web Directory is a list of Web pages selected by a person or group of people. **Web Directories can be real time savers.** Why go through the trouble of searching and then scrolling through several pages of links when someone else has already selected the best links on a subject for you?

Caution: some Web Directories are better than others. There is no guarantee that the compiler of links has any expertise in an area or that the links have been kept up to date. All of the catalogs on this list have stellar reputations.

By their very nature Web Directories are not comprehensive; they include only a limited number of links. Obviously, if you need to find scholarly information, use an academically oriented Web Catalog. For information on shopping or used car deals etc., use something similar to Looksmart.com.

Academic Web Directories

Academic Info

www.academicinfo.net

This is an outstanding annotated and well organized set of links compiled by academics. Its resources will be useful to both college freshmen and post-doctoral researchers. It includes links useful to students on college admissions, financial aid, test preparation, etc. Academic Info compiles so much interesting information that it can become a real time sink.

Infomine

<http://infomine.ucr.edu>

Infomine is an extensive list of quality academic Web sites. It can be searched or browsed; if a search is unsuccessful, browse by subject. It covers all academic disciplines but is especially strong in the sciences.

Librarian's Index to the Internet

<http://lii.org>

This is a well-organized directory with annotations and recommendations. It can be searched.

Scout Report

<http://scout.cs.wisc.edu/archives>

A great starting point for any kind of research. This site, sponsored by the National Science Foundation, is the archive of an electronic newsletter that describes outstanding new Web pages. This page is well organized and can be browsed or searched. It covers all subjects.

Virtual Library

www.vlib.org

The **Virtual Library** is the gold standard for academic Web Directories. All resources are selected by recognized experts, and annotated. Cannot be searched, but browsing is easy and logical.

General Web Directories

About

www.about.com

About is a generally well selected and well organized list of annotated links, compiled by volunteers with appropriate credentials. It can be searched or browsed. Have patience, though. This useful directory is being ruined by too many pop-up and other advertisements.

Internet Public Library

www.ipl.org

This source is highly selective and has helpful, lengthy annotations. It can be either searched or browsed.

Look Smart

www.looksmart.com

One of the largest and best organized of the Web directories; **Looksmart** can be searched or browsed.

Open Directory/Google Directory

www.google.com click on "Directory"

This site is a collaborative project by many experts from all over the world. It is selective, well organized and searchable. You can find the Open Directory on several Websites. I find the Google version the easiest to use.

Sources for Students

Montgomery College Library Web Subject Guides

www.mc.cc.md.us/library/mclibref.htm

This is a collection of links to quality sites, relevant to students at Montgomery College selected by MC Librarians.

Topic Based Resources

www.ohiou.edu/esl/project/index.html

Excellent, up to date guides to resources relevant to undergraduate student research. Look here for a list of trustworthy Web pages on subjects such as Abortion, the Death Penalty or Drugs, etc.

When Should You Use a Search Engine and When Should You Use a Web Catalog?

If You Are Searching For:	Use:
A Distinctive Word or Phrase	Search Engine
Information About Something Specific Such as a Product, Person, Organization or Event	Search Engine
No Specific Words	Boolean Search Engine Such as All the Web
Something Uncommon or Unusual	Search Engine
An Overview of a Broad Subject	Relevant Web Catalog
More Vocabulary Terms for a Search.	Relevant Web Catalog
Unsure of Your Topic	A Large Web Catalog Such as Scout Report or Looksmart
A Starting Point for a Novice Searcher	A Large Web Catalog

For example, a search for information about Irish Immigration to the United States should be started on an appropriate Web Directory. A Web Directory will most probably find a few outstanding and appropriate sites. A search about Irish Immigration to the east side of Cleveland, Ohio is too specific for almost all directories, and should be performed in a Search Engine.

For more information about Web directories, see:

This site gives a general overview:

Library Gateway at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

<http://gateway.library.uiuc.edu/rex/instruction/Internet/noframeschoose.htm>

For a bibliography of Web Directories see:

State University of New York at Albany Library.

<http://library.albany.edu/internet/subject.html>

Linda Fortney
Rockville Campus Library
Montgomery College
Aug. 2003
lfortney@mc.cc.md.us