

Sources About **Everything**

Encyclopedias: General, Audience-Specific (by Nation, Language, Age), Specialized/Subject, One-Volume, Foreign;
Web Directories

sources about everything

no such thing, really; rather, sources that cover widely and broadly

claim to be encompassing in scope (generally or specifically)

not primarily metadata (cf sources on books/serials)

starting points (also finishing points), for a wide variety of needs

encyclopedias

one of the oldest kinds of sources

< erroneous Greek "enkyklios paideia" ("encyclical education"),
meant to represent what an educated person needed to know

Historia Naturalis (Pliny the Elder ca 77), *Hortus deliciarum*

(Abbess Herrad ca 1180), *The Great Renewal* (Bacon 1620)

Encyclopédie (Diderot 1752-1772, 17 vol text, 11 plates, incl

contributions from Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Necker)

why not the Web?

why choose one of these over a general-purpose search engine?

- importance of need, authority
- area in which Web might not be strong
- depth, sophistication, detail
- worth the extra time

questions

1. What's the first known example of African art?
2. I need a complete list of Canadian honors (like knighthoods, etc, from the government).
3. Can you find me a good, brief, general history of Scandinavia?
4. What are Cyrenaics? And what's their history?
5. I'm looking for an English version of the Code of Hammurabi, and a little context and background about it.

questions

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Wikipedia

general encyclopedia

(incl links to free Web)

"pedia"; cf. Citizendium, Knol

proceeds from a very different starting point

Why does the Wikipedia fascinate and freak people out?

What factors will most affect Wikipedia's success? What would "success" look like, mean? Why have its competitors not thrived?

questions

4. What are Cyrenaics? And what's their history?

Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclopedia Americana, etc

general encyclopedia

large, comprehensive, one-size-fits-all, for everybody, for everything (?)

middle ground between incredibly detailed (incl books) and broad and vague (free Web)—how long does that go on? does that niche persist?

orientation with some depth, pointers to more detail

Britannica

one of the sources everybody knows, perception of quality,
stability, assurance, durability

scholarly tone, signed articles

15th edition, since 18c

11th (1911)

Propaedia—systematic v alphabetic arrangement

early online efforts

yearbooks

Americana

the other one

focus on the American experience, since 1830s

more reader-friendly

pedias

What are the basic premises of the "traditional" encyclopedia, and of the Wikipedia? Which one is better? When? For whom? Are there instances you would only or never use or recommend either?

questions

1. Can you find me a good, brief, general history of Scandinavia?

World Book Encyclopedia

specialized by audience

for young people

and for simple versions of potentially complex topics

questions

3. I need a complete list of Canadian honors (like knighthoods, etc, from the government).

Encyclopedia Canadiana

specialized by intent (national)

foreign, foreign-language

questions

4. What's the first known example of African art?

Encyclopedia Africana, Grove Dictionary of Art (Grove Art)

specialized by topic

there is almost always something (encyclopedia, dictionary, etc) [<search>](#); note call #s

Africana ex of newly emerging specialized focus

the story

it can all be known...

or at least what's worth knowing can be known

<p3>

standing in for us, knowing what we can't possibly know, to
be consulted

...and how the knowing happens matters

a couple others to know and love

(librarians, curiosities & grotesques)

Encyc of Library and Information Science

Encarta

one-volumes (*Concise Columbia, Random House*)

Great Soviet Encyclopedia



selection

by audience or level

by subject

by availability

by features of searching, coverage, format, etc

(look familiar?)