



AlphaSearch describes itself as a Web library of subject-related gateway sites designed for serious, academic pursuit of Web information. It defines a gateway as a site that organizes a large number of other sites all focused on an idea, subject or discipline.

The first thing that strikes you about AlphaSearch is how fast it loads, even though it is located in the US. The second thing is how useful it is. The concept is simple - to provide an access point for all the many other subject gateways and important top-level lists of resources on particular subjects, wherever they may be located. If a high-quality, current gateway site can be located, then nearly all the important web sites focusing on that subject are probably contained in that site. So AlphaSearch, which is a service of The Hekman Library, Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary of Grand Rapids, Michigan, helps people to find useful resources in their subject areas by directing them to the best catalogues of those resources. This is a noble concept, and AlphaSearch works quite well. It could do with more resources in its database, and additional keywords should be added to some of the records, but this site shows a lot of promise. When you browse AlphaSearch you are presented with a list of resources under such headings as Databases, Full-text documents, Gateways, Government Documents, Journals, etc, and each one is named, numbered, and briefly described. If you click on the 'More information...' link more details are given, including particulars of when the record was created on, whether it has been modified, and when the URL was checked. These details are important for verifying the usefulness of both the database and the resource in question, although many people will not bother with such fine detail. Altogether, AlphaSearch is a Nice Web Site.

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<http://www.hw.ac.uk/libWWW/irn/irn41/irn41d.html>