While the Library home page (lib.ucdavis.edu) looks inviting, the best link to start using library resources for research if you have not previously worked in the library much is via Canvas:

Ideally, the best place to start is to come to the ARE Library or Shields and talk to someone!

The UC Davis Library Canvas tile is a very simple and elegant guide to the most useful library resources. Two boxes in particular are essential:
The “Access VPN” link will walk you through installing the PulseSecure VPN client on your own computer. The Library spends millions of dollars every year on electronic resources which can only be accessed via an authenticated UC Davis IP address. PulseSecure will allow you to access these resources from pretty much anywhere in the world.

The “Subject Guides” link will take you to the page maintained by UC Davis subject librarians, highlighting, by subject area, the most useful resources for doing research. Generally, these will be indexes to scholarly articles, online reference tools, highly relevant websites, and e-book collections of various kinds. As you can see, there is a separate subject guide listing the most useful and/or essential resources for doing ARE research:
UC Davis Library subject guides generally rank resources in descending order from most important (sometimes, we just leave them in alphabetical order if there isn’t a single essential resource). If the resource is “licensed,” we put a VPN icon next to it to let the researcher know that they may have to install PulseSecure if they’re off-campus.
Most databases (subject or article indexes) work in the same way: they’re usually very responsive to simple keyword searches, and retrieve all the articles in the database that contain that keyword in the citation (article title, keyword list, or abstract). Note that we have moved from a UC Davis URL to another university, which maintains the index:
As you can see, indexes like AgEconSearch are a good way to find out what sorts of topics your professors are working on.

Other important indexes, like EconLit, are subscription databases. Proquest, a commercial publisher, always authenticates user by IP address. But just like AgEconSearch, the same simple keyword search-and-retrieval strategy applies:
Commercial publishers have incentives to provide more value, so you can see that Proquest’s version of EconLit includes features such as article previews, full text, bibliographic references, and the ability to sort by publication type (peer-reviewed, scholarly journals, books, working papers, etc.).

When you find an interesting article, the index will provide you lots of information to allow you to decide whether or not the article is useful (an abstract), and subject terms and related items so in case you want to see more articles like this. If you want to read the full text of the article, you should generally see an orange “UCD-eLinks” button, somewhere on the page.
When you click on the “UCD-eLinks” button, you’re taken to an intermediary page which determines whether or not UC Davis subscribes to the journal in question. If we have full-text electronic access, we provide a link. If we don’t have the journal, we always provide a link to allow you to request the article from another UC campus:
Clicking on the link takes us to the full text of the article. Note how many tabs we’ve opened up along the way. Also, you can see how many publishers keep track of UC Davis users. One useful feature that is offered throughout all these steps is a citation-creator tool, to help you prepare accurate and stylistically consistent bibliographies. Can you find the other citation generators in the other screen shots?
And remember you can always come to your librar(ies) if you need more help!