

Library and Research Terminology

Abstract: brief summary of the contents of a publication, usually an article.

Academic Journal: a journal associated with an institution of higher learning containing matters of current interest.

Autobiography: an account of a person's life, written by himself/herself.

Biography: an account of a person's life, described by another; life story.

Boolean Search: a symbolic logic, devised in 1850, by the English Mathematician George Boole. Boolean operators, the connective words "and," "or" and "not" are used in bibliographic searches to compare two or more items. "And" and "not" are used to narrow a search, while "or" is used to broaden a topic. Most search engines allow the use of Boolean, but the search interface will look different.

Call Number: a combination of classification and book number that identify a book. The call numbers are printed on the spine of each book and the books are shelved in alphabetical and numerical order.

Catalog: a list of library materials contained in a collection (books, maps, multimedia, etc.) of a particular library or group of libraries. The list may be in the form of cards, book, microform, or online (stored in the memory of a computer). To identify books, use the online catalog (OPAC), available on the library webpage or on dedicated computers in the library.

Circulation Desk: the place in the library from which materials are lent or given to patrons to use.

Citation: "block" of information that gives the important elements to refer an information source. These sources include magazine and journal periodicals, books, newspaper articles, or websites). This enables anyone, using the citation, to find the information source. For an article, the arts that must be included are: name(s) of author if given, title of article, name of periodical, volume/issue number, publication date, and page number(s). For a book, you need the author if given, the book's title, where published and publisher name, date published and page numbers. There are often specific rules to be follow according to style manuals such as MLA (Modern Language Association, APA (American Psychological Association), or the Chicago Manual of Style.

Classification: the unique number assigned to a work to show the subject area and indicate its location in the collection.

Classification System: the numbering scheme to keep the books on the same subject together. Every subject has an assigned number. Three common systems are Dewey Decimal System, Library of Congress Classification System, and the Universal Decimal System.

Copyright Date: the date the copyright is issued. This is usually found on the verso (left side) of the title page.

Cross-Reference: a direction from one subject heading to another. References may be general to indicate a class, giving an individual subject heading only as an example, as ANIMALS see also under names of animals such as LION; or specific by stating the exact heading to which reference must be made, as, ANIMALS see LION, CLEMENS, S.L. see TWAIN, MARK. They may be made between (a) synonymous headings - see references, and (b) related headings - see also headings.

Database: a collection of records for the purpose of information storage and retrieval. Some databases are indexing/abstracting only; others will contain full-text.

Descriptor: interchangeable with "subject heading" or "index term." This is a word(s) that has been selected to describe subject content and is used in searching through indexes. See subject heading.

Edition: all copies that are produced without changing the text or publishers. A book may be reprinted many years after it is first published and still be the same edition.

Full-text database: contains the complete text of the publication as well as providing the citation to the print original.

Index: arranges information in a list by topic, author, title, data, etc. It also provides a citation for the publication to indicate where it can be found. One example is the printed New York Times Index.

Indexing/Abstracting database: online database that does not provide the full-text. It **indexes** (see definition above) publications and sometimes provides abstracts. These are still predominant over **full-text databases** in many instances, especially for academic/scholarly and discipline-specific databases.

ISBN: acronym for the International Standard Book Number - a unique number assigned to each book used by the book industry.

ISSN acronym for the International Standard Serial Number - a unique number assigned to each serial publication used by the book industry.

Interlibrary Loan: a service through which a library borrows and lends materials to other libraries upon request. If a patron wishes to acquire a book or article that his/her library does not own, the librarian may arrange to borrow the item from another library.

Journal: a periodical that is often refereed by a board of editors to ensure the quality of the research/information. It also contains information of current interest.

Magazine: a periodical for general reading, containing articles on different subjects by different kinds of authors. This type of publication does not generally have an editorial board and is not viewed as favorably as journals for a source of research.

Online: direct communication between computers using telecommunication.

Periodical: a publication usually published weekly, monthly or quarterly, that appears at regular intervals. Magazines, newspapers, journals, and reports that are issues on a regular, sequential database are types of periodicals.

Record: an individual unit of information in a computerized database. In the case of textual databases, one record may represent a published article, a citation to a publication, a product description, or a company report. In numeric databases, it could be a chart, table, or statistic.

Reference Books: the non-circulating materials that provide information about a topic. These give facts, data, and broad overview of topics. Encyclopedias, almanacs, dictionaries, and directories are included.

Reference Desk: one of the main areas of the library where patrons can ask for informational assistance.

Refereed/Peer Reviewed Journal: also called a peer reviewed journal. This is a periodical that has its article submissions carefully reviewed by editorial boards (subject experts) to uphold the standards of the journal.

Reserve: library materials for which there are frequent requests. Often they are housed in a controlled area of the library where they are lent for a few hours at a time. This is usually near the Circulation Desk. In academic libraries, reading materials for classes are kept on reserve so the entire class can read them in a short period of time.

Serial: a publication issued in successive parts and intended to continue indefinitely. Periodicals, including journals, magazines, newspapers, and newsletters are considered serials.

Subject Heading: a word or group of words used to describe a book, article or other information resource. These are also called Descriptors in some databases. These are assigned by someone or by an organization (i.e. Library of Congress assigns the Library of Congress Subject Headings to describe books in the library catalog) and it groups together similar topics under one heading. To find out what term or subject heading to use for a topic, you may do a keyword search and then examine the record indexing for the subject headings, use the printed thesaurus that is appropriate for that database (i.e. the Library of Congress Subject Headings bound volumes found in the library), or many databases have a browsable descriptor or subject heading list that uses hypertext linking.

Title Page: a page that is found near the beginning of a book that usually contains the most complete bibliographic information such as author's name, the official title, the edition, and publishing information.