

Library Terminology

Please check the [Multilingual Glossary](#) from the American Library Association to find library terminology in other languages.

Abstract: The summary of an article.

Academic Journal: A journal containing research articles written by scholars for an academic audience.

Advanced Search: A process of searching that allows you to construct more complex or refined searches. You can often limit your results to specific kinds of information (newspapers or journals) or types of resources (books or DVDs).

Authentication: Establishing the identity of a person and verifying their right to access specific databases or computer functions.

Barcode: A scannable label used for two different functions in a library: 1) as a label on most library material used to identify items when they are checked out and returned; 2) on the back of the library card or student card providing a unique number that identifies you in our library system.

Basic Search: The best way to do a simple search for one key component of an information source, such as a keyword, or a title or an author.

Bibliography: A list of books, articles, and other materials on a related subject.

Boolean Operators: A method of combining search terms by expressing the relationship of one concept to another. Specifically, the use of AND, OR, and NOT to refine or expand the possible results in your search.

Call Number: A combination of letters and numbers which indicates the specific shelf location of an item in the library. Check out our guide to understanding [LC Call Numbers](#) here!

Catalogue / Library Catalogue: A catalogue contains records, with detailed descriptions and location information, of the individual materials in a library collection.

Circulating Material: Books or other library material that may be checked out for use outside the library.

Circulation Desk: The area of the library where books and other library material may be checked out and/or returned.

Citation: Information describing a book, article, recording, or other publication. Standard elements included in citations are title, author(s), place of publication, publisher, date, and item format.

Course Reserves (or Reserves): Required or recommended readings, books, articles textbooks or class notes that your instructor has placed on reserve for you to use.

Database: A regularly updated collection of articles, images, abstracts, etc. that can be searched and retrieved. Academic Search Premier is an example of a database that contains articles which are available online for authorized users (i.e. George Brown students and faculty).

Directory: A searchable list of the names and addresses of persons, organizations, or institutions. Commonly in book format, but many are available through library databases or online.

E-book: An electronic version of a traditional print book that can be accessed online and read using a personal computer or an eBook reader.

Encyclopedia: A reference book that gives a brief overview of a topic, including definition, descriptions, background, and bibliographical references.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions): A document that lists commonly asked questions, along with their answers, on a specific subject or in a specific area.

Full-text: In article databases, full-text indicates the ability to link directly to the full and complete article text exactly as it appeared in the print copy of the journal, newspaper, or magazine. Please note that full-text does not necessarily mean "full image" (pictures, photographs, and graphs may not be present).

Interlibrary Loan (ILL): A procedure for borrowing books, periodicals and other materials from other libraries.

Internet: The internet is a global system of computer networks allowing computers with specific software and hardware to communicate with one another. This network links computers used by universities, government departments, businesses, and private individuals.

Journal: A publication containing scholarly articles on a particular subject.

Keyword: Relevant word(s) selected by the researcher to locate materials in the library catalogue or article databases. Keywords are drawn from a person's natural vocabulary and allow you to type in any word you think defines your topic.

Keyword Search: A search method using a significant word, or words to find items related to your research topic. Keyword searches can be used in library catalogues and article databases.

Magazine: A publication containing articles, stories, etc. usually with photographs, illustrations and advertisements which may focus on matters of general popular interest (i.e. Macleans) or of special interest (i.e. P.C. Computing).

Network: Several computers hooked together making it easier to share printers and information, run programs, and access files.

Peer Reviewed Journal: A type of academic journal in which the articles in the special field covered were reviewed by an outside body of experts prior to publication.

Periodical: A publication issued on a regular or periodic basis. Newspapers, magazines, scholarly journals, popular journals, professional journals, and trade journals are examples of periodicals. A periodical is also known as a "serial" publication because it is produced on an ongoing basis.

Periodical Index: An index to articles published in many periodicals issued at regular intervals and cumulated annually. It may also include conference proceedings, selected books, book chapters, reports, and dissertations.

Popular Article: A popular article is usually written in simple language by a staff or freelance writer, to entertain or report on information second or third hand. It rarely provides footnotes or a bibliography, or qualifications of the author, and is usually published by commercial publishers. Examples of popular articles: articles published in Maclean's or Time Magazine.

Primary Source: The original resource that first reported research or ideas. Some types are: diaries, speeches, letters, interviews, newspapers, autobiographies and official records including government publications, legislation, court reports, etc.

Record: The data relating to a publication on which a library catalogue or database entry is based. Each record includes fields that describe the publication.

Reference Material: A book such as a dictionary, encyclopedia, or directory that contains specific facts, data, or other brief synopsis of information. Most reference books may not be borrowed because they are needed on a daily basis to answer questions at the reference desk.

Reference Services: Also called research services, it is the desk or section of the library where librarians or library technicians help users find materials for their research, and teach users how to use library resources.

Reference Stacks: An area in the library specifically for the shelving of reference books (such as dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks) that do not circulate and are for use in the library only.

Reserves (or Course Reserves): Required or recommended readings, books, articles textbooks or class notes that your instructor has placed on reserve for you to use. It also refers to the area in the library (behind the circulation desk) where these materials are shelved.

Scholarly Article: A scholarly article reports original research or experimentation. It is written by a researcher or expert in the field who is often affiliated with a college or university.

Search Engine: A software program that provides a keyword search system allowing the user to identify and retrieve resources online based on words, phrases, or patterns within those documents. Google is one of the best known search engines.

Secondary Source: Works (published or unpublished) that rely on the research provided by a primary source as their source of information. Some types of secondary sources are: textbooks, journal articles, histories, criticisms, commentaries, and encyclopedias.

Stacks: An area in the library for the shelving of books that may be checked out to users for their use outside of the library.

Streaming: The process by which a computer delivers audio/video information to others over a network. The computer reading the file plays audio/video as data is delivered, without downloading the file.

Style Manual: A style manual is a guide, or handbook, that gives the rules for documenting and citing research. The most commonly used styles are: MLA (English and Literature) and APA (Sciences, Psychology and the Social Sciences).

Subject Heading: A prescribed word or group of words under which publications dealing with a particular subject are listed in a catalogue, periodical index, or electronic database.

Subject Search: Using the prescribed word or group of words determined by the library, catalogue or database, to find publications dealing with a particular topic.

Trade Publication / Trade Journal: A periodical publication focusing on matters concerning a particular industry or group of industries. Examples include: Women's Wear Daily, Canadian Grocer.

Adapted from the [American Library Association](#) and [Queen's University](#).