abstract. (1) A summary containing the key points of a document, book, article, etc. (2) A reference source similar to an index. In addition to providing citations to periodical articles, books, etc., summaries (abstracts) are provided. Abstracts reflect a specific area or field of research. For example, Historical Abstracts indexes journals, books, etc. in the field of history.

accession number. A unique number or combination of letters and numbers assigned to each record in a database.

almanac. An annual digest of facts and statistics, current and retrospective, of practical use to readers. Almanacs are one-volume collections of information from many sources. They are usually published yearly.

annotation. A brief note, usually no longer than two or three sentences, accompanying a reference or citation in a bibliography which describes or explains the scope and content of the work cited.

archives. Public records pertaining to an organization or institution. Also, the place where archives are kept.

atlas. A book containing a collection of maps, with or without descriptive text, covering a given area which may range from the entire world to a small geographic area. Specialized atlases may contain maps of such things as a historical period or product distribution.

audiovisual materials. Any library materials involving hearing or sight such as sound recordings (compact discs, records, cassette tapes, etc.) and moving images ( videotapes, film, digital versatile discs, etc.

author. A person chiefly responsible for writing a book or article.

barcode number. A multi-digit number used to uniquely identify an object. In libraries, barcode numbers (often 10 or 11 digits) appear beneath the barcode found inside or outside the back covers of a book. Barcodes are used to charge, discharge, and renew books on the online computer system. Identification cards also have barcodes on them to uniquely identify a person's card and library account.

bibliography. A list of sources cited or references for further reading, usually printed at the end of an article or in the back matter of a book. Long bibliographies may be published separately in book form. Bibliographies with annotations or summaries are called “annotated bibliographies.”

biography. A written account of a person’s life. Biographies may include information about an individual’s education and employment history, as well as, creative accomplishments, awards, and publications.


Boolean operator. A technique of a searcher to combine concepts in a keyword search using three commands, also known as operators. The OR command is used to expand or broaden search results by including synonyms. The AND command is used to narrow search results. The NOT command is used to exclude unwanted records from search results.

bound periodicals. A number of issues of a magazine or journal, often in a year, bound together.

browse (search). In database search terminology, a method of searching alphabetically or numerically. For example, searching for a title or a name in alphabetical order.

browser (web). Software that enables you to locate and display World Wide Web documents. Two of the most popular browsers are Netscape Navigator and Internet Explorer.

call number. An alphanumeric system used to shelve books and other materials in a systematic manner. A call number can also reflect the subject matter of an item so that materials on similar topics are shelved together. Most academic libraries use the Library of Congress Classification System for shelving books and periodicals. Superintendent of Documents (SuDocs) for U.S. government documents, and accession numbers for materials in other formats.

catalog. A file of bibliographic records which describes the materials contained in a collection. There are many types of library catalog formats of catalogs: book, microfiche, CD-ROM, and card. Today, most catalogs are computerized and known as online catalogs. You may also see the acronym OPAC, which stands for online public access catalog.

CD-ROM. Compact Disc-Read Only Memory, a small plastic disk, used for publishing and storing information. In libraries, CD-ROM usually refers to a computerized index or other reference source that has information stored on a compact disc.

circulation counter. The place to check out books and other materials from a library.

citation. A description of a publication; a complete citation usually includes author, title, name of journal (if the citation is to an article) or publisher (if to a book), and date. Often pages, volumes and other information will be included in a citation.

classification system. A series of classes arranged in a particular order according to a pre-established principle in library cataloging for the purpose of organizing books and materials for ease of access by users. Most academic libraries use the Library of Congress classification system.

closed shelves. Shelving in a library which is restricted from direct public access. Library users request closed shelf materials from the circulation counter.

controlled vocabulary. A prescribed list of vocabulary, subject headings or descriptors made by someone else.

copy card. A small plastic debit card which can be purchased from a vending machine or the business office of the library for use in photocopiers, microform reader-printer machines, and laser printers.

copyright. The exclusive legal right granted by a government to an author, editor, composer, playwright, publisher, or distributor to publish, produce, sell or distribute a literary, musical, dramatic, or artistic work.

cross-reference. A reference from one heading to another in the same catalog or index.

database. An extensive and comprehensive set of records collected and organized in a meaningful manner to serve a particular purpose. Library catalogs and periodical indexes are examples of databases.

defbit card. A small plastic card which can be purchased from a vending machine or the business office of the library for use in photocopiers, microform reader-printer machines, and laser printers.

descriptor. A standardized word or phrase applied to a document in order to convey all or some of its content.
Dewey Decimal classification system. A classification system devised by Melvil Dewey to organize and group similar books and information on the shelves of a library. Often used in public libraries.
dictionary. A book explaining the words of a language usually giving meaning and pronunciation of each word. It may include usage and derivations of words. An unabridged dictionary is comprehensive and not reduced in size by the removal of words. An unabridged dictionary has more than 300,000 words.
directory. A list of contact information for a specific group or category of people, companies, or organizations. Usually shelved in reference stacks. It may also include names of officers, publications, and other pertinent data about the organization.
document delivery. A way of providing a document to library users, either in print or in electronic format. The service may be automated or staffed. Typical examples include: (1) A user wanting a periodical article or book that the library does not carry, would make request through Interlibrary Loan. (2) A user requesting an article through an online database provider, usually for a fee or subsidized by the library.
download. The transfer of data from a remote computer to a local machine, from the hard disk to floppy disk or from a networked CD-ROM application to a hard disk.
e-book. A book designed and published specifically in electronic format for display on a computer screen.
edition. All copies of a book printed from one typesetting without substantial change. A revised edition is a corrected and updated edition based on the original with modifications.
editor. The person responsible for compiling and organizing a periodical or a book written by several authors.
e-journal. A journal designed and published specifically in electronic format for display on a computer screen.
electronic resources. Information and reference sources delivered by electronic means such as library catalogs, encyclopedias, periodical indexes, directories, and many more. May include delivery through the World Wide Web, CD-ROM, or other online systems.
e-mail. Electronic mail or Internet protocol allowing computer users to exchange messages in real time with others locally and across networks.
encyclopedia. A book or set of books containing information about a variety of subjects in the form of essays arranged in alphabetical order by subject. Encyclopedias provide an overview and background information. They often include photographs, charts, and bibliographies for further study.
extry. A record representing an item in a library catalog, printed index, or electronic database.
field. A particular section of a computer record. e.g. author (au), title (ti), journal (jn), or publication date (py) of a document.
folio. A large book or journal which is shelved separately from the adult and young adult.
gazetteer. A dictionary of geographical information and data about places.
government document. A publication issued at government expense or published by authority of a governmental body.
guide. In library terminology, a reference book that tells you how to do research in a specific field. It gives information on research methods and library sources, tailored to a particular subject area.
handbook. A reference book of compact size which provides instructions or useful factual or technical information on a specific subject organized for easy access by users. Often tables and charts include specific information for the handbook or manual user.
hold. In library terminology, the process of requesting that a book be reserved for you after the current user is finished with it. The circulation counter is where one can request that a hold be put on a book.
home page. The first screen you see when you go to a site on the World Wide Web.
http (hypertext transfer protocol). The World Wide Web protocol that performs the request and retrieve functions necessary to display documents stored on remote computers.
index. (1) An alphabetically arranged list of names, places, and subjects used in a printed work, with page numbers to refer the reader to the correct location in the text. (2) A reference tool that tells you which articles are in which periodicals, often including reviews or critiques of books, plays, short stories, essays, or movies.
interlibrary loan (ILL). The process in which a registered borrower may request that an unavailable book or item be borrowed from another library outside of the UH system.
International Standard Serial Number (ISSN). A unique eight-digit publisher's code assigned to a specific serial prior to publication for identification purposes.
Internet. A global network of computer networks allowing computers with specific software and hardware to communicate with one another.
intrasytem loan (ISL). The process in which a registered borrower may request that a book or item be borrowed from another library within the UH system.
issue. For a periodical, the individual publishing unit. A number of issues make up a volume.
journal. A periodical distributing current information about research and developments in a specific field of scholarly study, usually published quarterly or bimonthly. Most journal articles include a bibliography and are longer than five pages. Articles in the sciences and social sciences usually include an abstract at the beginning of the article summarizing the main points of the article.
juvenile collection. A library collection of books and other material intended specifically for children under the age of 12, shelved separately from the adult and young adult.
keyword. A significant word or phrase in the abstract, title, subject headings or text selected by the searcher to locate materials in electronic databases. Keywords are drawn from a person's natural vocabulary and allow you to type in any word you think defines your topic. Keywords are not the same as subject headings.
Library of Congress classification system. A system (call numbers) designed by the Library of Congress to uniquely identifying a book or other material in the library. A book's call number is its address in the library. In addition to being an address, the system of call numbers also group materials by subject.
Library of Congress Subject Headings. A standardized list of subject headings created by the Library of Congress.
location code. A code used by a library, often in the library's online catalog, to designate a particular collection of materials or area of the library.
magazine. A popular or general interest periodical containing articles on various topics written by different authors. Articles are usually short, unsigned and do not include a bibliography or list of references. Most are issued monthly or weekly.
manual. A "how-to" book on a particular subject. See also handbook.
manuscript. A typewritten or handwritten (as opposed to printed) book or document.
map. A representation on a plane surface, of a region, and may include physical features and political boundaries.
microfiche. A card-shaped sheet of photographic film used to store text in a grid pattern which can be magnified and copied only with the aid of a microform reader-printer machine.
microfilm. A continuous roll of photographic film, used to store miniaturized text which can be magnified and copied only with the aid of a reader-printer machine.
**microform.** A general term for all media used to store miniaturized text and graphics on film or paper, including microfilm and microfiche.

**monograph.** A scholarly book on a specific subject.

**nested search.** In online information retrieval, the use of parentheses in a search statement to specify priority of execution.

**newspaper.** A type of periodical usually published daily or weekly that provides news and current events information in a particular geographic region and the world.

**peer-reviewed.** A publication that has been reviewed by experts to determine if it meets the research standards of a field of study. See also refereed journal.

**periodical.** A publication issued at regular intervals such as a newspaper, magazine, or journal. See also serial.

**primary source.** A document which an event is described by its witnesses or first recorders. Some types are: diaries, speeches, letters, interviews, newspapers, autobiographies and official records including government publications, poetry, novels, art, music, furniture, clothing, buildings and jewelry.

**proximity operator.** In online information retrieval, the means by which the relation between two or more terms are specified in order to retrieve relevant items.

**recall.** A notification that is sent out to inform a borrower that material currently checked out has been requested by another patron.

**record (database).** A collection of related data treated as a unit (e.g. details of author, title, publisher, publication year, and subject headings of a publication in a library catalog).

**referred journal.** A periodical that requires articles to be reviewed by experts to determine if it meets the research standards of a field of study. See also peer-reviewed.

**reference (service).** A service provided by libraries to help people learn how to find information. The services may include individual instruction, use of reference sources, the library catalog, etc. Services are provided at reference desks, by telephone, and by e-mail.

**reference collection.** Library resources such as indexes, catalogs, encyclopedias, directories, etc. which are shelved together in a special location known as the reference collection; or available electronically such as through the web, CD-ROM, or online services.

**reference librarian.** A librarian who is responsible for providing information and instruction on the use of library resources.

**reference material.** A book or other work intended to be consulted rather than read completely; usually a source used within the library or electronically. For example, indexes, catalogs, encyclopedias, directories, etc. are referred to as references.

**research.** Diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to discover facts, theories, or applications.

**reserve collection.** Materials placed in the library with special use or limited access status; usually set aside at the request of an instructor for use by students from a particular class. Often referred to as reserves.

**reserve room.** A room where materials are placed in the library with special use or limited access status.

**scholarly journal.** A journal published by and for experts in a particular field of study. Articles are written by scholars in the field and are usually signed. Articles usually include bibliographies, references cited, and notes. The main purpose is to report on original research. See also peer-reviewed and refereed journal.

**search engine.** A software program that searches a database or index to find a keyword or key phrase. In Internet terminology, a program that collects and indexes Internet resources (web pages, Usenet Newsgroups, programs, graphic images, etc.) and provides a keyword search system allowing the user to identify and retrieve resources based on words, phrases, or patterns within those documents.

**secondary source.** Material or sources that contain information that has been cited, translated, or based on another primary or original sources.

**serials.** Publications that appear more or less regularly — daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, or biannually. For example, a newspaper, magazine, journal, annual, etc.

**stacks.** A part of the library which houses the physical collection of books and periodicals on bookshelves.

**statistical sources.** Sources that give you numerical data. They provide compilations of statistics from a variety of entities. They are often published annually.

**stop word.** A word or term that is considered not to be significant for the purpose of information retrieval and that are excluded from indexing.

**style manual.** A set of guidelines on how to prepare footnotes and bibliographies and edit a manuscript.

**subject heading.** A standardized word or phrase applied to a document in order to convey all or some of its content.

**Superintendent of Documents (SuDocs).** A classification system for U.S. government documents. An alphanumeric notation designating the issuing unit (agency, department, etc.), type of series, and individual book number.

**telnet.** An Internet standard protocol for logging into remote computers.

**tertiary sources.** A written work such as a chapter in a textbook or an essay in a reference book based entirely on secondary sources rather than on original research involving primary documents.

**textbook.** A book or standard work used by students in the study of a subject.

**thesaurus.** A list of standard subject terms, or descriptors, in a particular field of knowledge, that can be used to index documents for retrieval on online searching. A thesaurus usually provides synonym control and demonstrates the relationship between terms.

**thesis.** (1) A hypothetical proposition. (2) A proposition, as one advanced by a candidate for an academic degree, that is maintained by argument. (3) A lengthy formal written treatise or dissertation. (4) A dissertation advancing an original point of view as a result of research, typically in partial fulfillment for an academic degree. A treatise for a master's degree is typically referred to as a thesis; and, for a doctoral degree it typically referred to as a dissertation.

**truncation.** The addition of a symbol at the end of a root word in a keyword search to retrieve alternate endings on the root. In most online catalogs, the truncation symbol is the asterisk.

**union catalog.** A catalog that contain the bibliographic records, holdings, and locations of resources from more than one library.

**URL (uniform resource locator).** The address of any source on the Internet that is part of the World Wide Web.

**volume.** An individual book. For a periodical, it is the collective unit for a set of issues, usually one year.

**web site.** A location on any server that contains World Wide Web documents.

**World Wide Web (WWW, Web, W3).** A part of the Internet that allows people access to hypertext information in a graphical environment. Documents can be connected to other documents by hypertext.

**yearbook.** A book that contains events or progress of a particular year. Includes a brief and concise account of the significant events of the year and statistics.