

## Library and Research Glossary

As with many professions, the library and academic worlds use a lot of language you may not be familiar with. The following is a selected list of library and research terms and their definitions to help with your transition to library and scholarly research.

**Abstract:** A summary, usually one paragraph in length, of the contents of an article or other document. Abstracts can be found at the beginning of scholarly articles or might accompany citations in a periodical database.

**Academic Fraud:** A term that describes any number of activities that go against the academic mission, including plagiarism and other forms of cheating.

**Annotated:** To have included comments of a critical or explanatory nature. Some bibliographies are annotated to help users select and understand included items.

**Article:** A paper published either online or in a popular magazine or scholarly journal that is accessible in either print or electronic form.

**Auto Alerts:** A service offered by some databases and other search tools, such as Google, to notify you when new items of interest are added.

**Barcode:** A number embedded on your student ID card after you register as a Shapiro Library borrower that allows you to borrow books and use certain library databases from off-campus.

**Bibliographic Record:** The information about a book you find in an online catalog that includes the title, author name, and publication information. You use the bibliographic record to discover the library's holdings of a particular item. Compare to "citation" below.

**Bibliography:** A list of citations to materials (books, articles, dissertations, Web sites, etc.) used in research. Bibliographies can be found at the end of student papers, journal articles, encyclopedia entries, books, and Web sites. Book-length bibliographies have been compiled on specific subjects or on items by a particular author and may exist in either print or electronic format. Some bibliographies are annotated with comments on the included items. Bibliographies for student papers can be created automatically using citations added to RefWorks.

**Blog:** Short for "Web log," an online diary or newsletter that is regularly updated and designed to be read by a wide public audience. The author of a blog is often called a "blogger."

**Boolean Operators:** The terms “AND,” “OR,” and “NOT” that when used with keywords to search a database can help pinpoint (broaden or narrow) search results.

**Browser:** A computer application, such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, or Safari, that allows pages from the World Wide Web (WWW) to be viewed and manipulated (for example, searched). To use a browser to search the Web is sometimes called “surfing.”

**Browsing:** The ability to scan a library bookshelf for similar items, made possible because library materials are generally shelved by subject, often according to Library of Congress Subject Headings.

**Call Number:** The unique set of assigned letters and numbers that allows an item to be located in a library collection. The Shapiro Library uses the “Library of Congress Classification” system for assigning call numbers; most high schools and public libraries use the “Dewey Decimal System.”

**Circulating Collection:** The materials that may be borrowed from a library. Items from the Shapiro Library can “circulate,” or can be borrowed, for a three-week period. Some library materials do not circulate, such as the reference and periodicals collections, and are designated as “non-circulating.”

**Circulation Desk:** The place in the library where books are borrowed (checked out) and returned, and where Interlibrary Loan and reserve items can be picked up. The circulation desk is also where new library users go to “register” their ID cards.

**Citation:** Information about a book, article, Website or other information source that is necessary in order to locate the item for use. Citation information typically includes the title, author, and publication or access information. Citations are found in footnotes, bibliographies, printed indexes, library catalogs, databases, on the World Wide Web (WWW), and in other places where information is “cited.”

**Citation Style:** The discipline-specific format in which citations are written. Humanities courses often use MLA (Modern Language Association) style, whereas social science courses often use APA (American Psychological Association) style. There are literally dozens of styles that have been established. Typically, each instructor will indicate what citation style should be used for each course. The rules for citation styles can be found in Style Manuals. Knowledge management tools such as Refworks can format citations to proper citation styles automatically.

**Consortium:** A group of libraries that come together for common purposes, such as sharing their catalogs among member libraries or allowing users to borrow materials. SNHU belongs to several “consortia,” including NHCUC: the New Hampshire College and University Council, which includes St. Anselm, UNH, Daniel Webster College, and others, which allow SNHU students to borrow books directly.

**Controlled vocabulary:** Descriptive terms that have been "controlled" or standardized. The most common subject headings are Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), established by the Library of Congress, and the Medical Subject Headings (MESH), which are established by the National Library of Medicine. Thesauri, subject lists, and article "descriptors" are other forms of controlled vocabularies.

**Copyright:** the legal right of owners (creators, authors) to determine when and how their work is copied and distributed. Generally speaking, if you want to use material that someone else has created you have to secure their permission to use it; sometimes this involves paying a royalty fee.

**Cycle of Information:** Also called "the scholarly dialog," or "scholarly discussion," the process by which information is used and manipulated by scholars (faculty members or students) to become knowledge. This new knowledge then becomes information to other researchers who cite in when they use it to produce new knowledge, and the cycle or dialog continues. University students are indoctrinated into the cycle of information by their disciplinary studies, including source citation to avoid plagiarism.

**Database:** A collection of related information that can be accessed and manipulated (for example, searched) by a computer. In the library, the term often refers to an online catalog or an electronic article or citation index; search engines, such as Google, are databases that operate by indexing Web pages.

**Full Text:** The complete rendering of an article or document. Traditionally, full text was only found in print resources; increasingly (but not always) full text articles and other documents can be found using electronic databases.

**GMILCS:** Pronounced "Gee-Milks, a consortium made up of public and academic libraries in the Greater Manchester area of which SNHU is a member.

**Hits:** The number of items retrieved from a search performed in a database.

**Holdings:** The actual physical items (books, paper journals, etc.) that exist in a library. Use a library catalog to check an item's bibliographic record to find the library's holdings of that item. Items that the library does not hold can often be borrowed from another library using Interlibrary Loan.

**Index:** (1) The section of a book that indicates where major topics can be found within the book. (2) For periodicals, an index is a listing of where individual articles can be found within the various issues. Increasingly, periodical indexes are moving from print format to electronic databases.

**Information:** A term with many meanings depending on the context used, but for our purposes a term defined as any documentation that can be used to create knowledge.

It can therefore consist of everything from spoken words, written communications, statistical data, sheets of music, photographs and paintings, to computer codes and scientific formulae.

**Information Literacy:** An intellectual process encompassing the ability to define when information is needed, and to locate, understand, evaluate, utilize, and convey that information in specific projects required at school, home, work, and in the community. The research process is one component of Information Literacy.

**Intellectual property:** any product of the intellectual process, such as scholarly or creative work, which can include inventions, literary and artistic works, including images and music; and such things as symbols, names, and other commercial designs. Intellectual property is often protected by copyright, trademark, or patent laws.

**Interlibrary Loan:** A service through which circulating materials that one library does not hold can be borrowed from another library. At the Shapiro Library this service is provided at no charge for current students, faculty, and staff. Interlibrary Loan is often abbreviated ILL (pronounced EYE-ELL-ELL).

**Journal:** A periodical publication. Popular journals contain articles that are written for a wide public audience (for example *Time Magazine*); scholarly journals use formal, scientific, or complex language, and are where scholars publish their research (for example, *American Literary Realism*). Many scholarly journals are peer-reviewed. Journal articles traditionally have been published in print format, but increasingly older journal articles can be accessed in full text online by using periodical indexes.

**Keywords:** The words and phrases used to express elements of an information topic that are then entered into a database search box.

**Keyword search:** To search in a database using keywords. A keyword search is best used to identify and locate unknown items, for example, to find whether the online catalog or a periodical index contains an item on a particular subject.

**Knowledge Management:** A method for capturing, organizing, and storing information and making it available to others. RefWorks is a type of knowledge management tool for managing research citations across projects; an ePortfolio is another type of knowledge management tool that can collect and organize student work for using and sharing with others over time. Knowledge management is an important component of Information Literacy.

**Known item:** an item you know something about, as opposed to an unknown item. An author or title search is best used to identify and locate known items. If you are looking specifically for a copy of Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, you're looking for a known item.

**Library of Congress Classification (LC):** The system of letters and numbers devised by the Library of Congress to divide knowledge into subject areas. Most college and university libraries, as well as large public libraries, use the Library of Congress Classification to assign call numbers and arrange books on shelves. Doing so keeps books about similar subjects together, which facilitates browsing.

**Library of Congress Subject Headings:** A list of controlled vocabulary terms for describing the subjects of library materials, established by the Library of Congress. Subject headings are arranged in alphabetical order by the broadest headings, with more precise headings listed next to them, such as “Emperors—Rome—Biography.”

**Library Catalog:** A list of items in the library. Today, most library catalogs are accessible online (see online catalog below); some libraries still use paper card catalogs.

**Non-circulating:** The materials that may not be borrowed from a library. Items from the Shapiro Library that are non-circulating include the reference and periodicals collections. Compare to “Circulating” items.

**NHCUC:** A consortium of New Hampshire college and academic libraries that includes among others, Colby-Sawyer College, Daniel Webster College, Dartmouth College, Franklin Pierce College, Keen State College, New England College, Plymouth State College, Rivier College, St. Anselm College, SNHU, and UNH.

**Online catalog:** Electronic form of the library card catalog that contains information on items that the library holds.

**Peer-reviewed journals:** those journals that have had their articles evaluated or “vetted” by professional peers of the author (working in the same or an affiliated field) and judged by an editor or editorial board to be sufficiently scholarly and original prior to publication.

**Periodical:** An item either in print or electronic format that is published periodically, such as weekly, or monthly. Periodicals can include newspapers, newsletters, popular or trade magazines, and scholarly journals in which scholars publish their research. Libraries often have a periodicals area where such items are housed separately from books and other materials.

**Plagiarism:** To take the ideas, words, or work of another and using or passing them off as your own, whether you mean to or not. Plagiarism can be as overt as buying or copying a term paper found online and passing it in as your assigned class paper; or plagiarism can be as subtle as not citing all the sources you used in your research or not citing them properly in your bibliography. Plagiarism is a serious form of academic fraud and goes against the academic mission expressed by the cycle of information.

**Primary sources:** Original materials or raw data created by an individual, a team, or an organization, also called “primary source material.” They are from the original time period (contemporary to events) and have not been interpreted or evaluated by others.

**Research:** For university purposes, research can be defined as the process of collecting, organizing, and analyzing information to create knowledge.

**Research Process:** A component of Information Literacy that entails understanding a research assignment, finding background information, and locating, evaluating, and using information effectively to complete a paper, project, or presentation.

**ResearchNavigator.com:** a Web-based tool used to introduce students to the steps and tools necessary to learn the research process.

**Reference Desk:** The place in the library where you can ask questions concerning the information you need. Librarians at the reference desk provide assistance on using the library collections and databases, understanding research assignments, and other aspects of the research process. They are there to help you! Just ask!

**RefWorks:** A Web-based knowledge management product that simplifies the process of collecting, documenting, and citing sources in a research paper, dissertation, or other project requiring citations. It helps you to create a personal database to manage collections of references, to import references directly from some of online databases, and to automatically create bibliographies that can be inserted into word processing documents. SNHU has a subscription to RefWorks: for more information see <http://www.snhu.edu/640.asp> .

**Registration:** The process of activating your student ID card so that you can borrow library materials. Registration forms are at the Circulation Desk and take less than two minutes to fill out. **Note:** this is a completely separate process from student registration and must be done by each individual student in the Shapiro Library.

**Search engine:** An online searchable database that indexes Web pages. No single search engine can index the entire Web, so bookmark a “metasearch engine,” such as Dogpile, that can search across search engines, or bookmark two or three of your individual favorites, such as Google, Yahoo, or Ask.com.

**Search strategy:** The formulation of your research topic into distinct elements (such as keywords, etc.) that will be understood and successfully processed by a database. A search strategy might involve using Boolean operators such as “AND,” “OR,” and “NOT,” or selecting other options from the database interface.

**Secondary sources:** those materials that analyze, interpret, comment on, or discuss primary sources. They are published after the fact of the original event, and tend to be argumentative or present a specific perspective. Examining the footnotes,

references cited, or bibliographies of secondary sources can often help locate primary sources.

**Subject:** (1) A category of information or a field of study, as in “What subject have you decided to major in?” (2) The organizational scheme libraries use most frequently to order books on shelves. This keeps books on similar topics together to facilitate browsing. (3) A grouping of keywords associated with a topic: *colonial agriculture* is a subject, and a broad one. A subject does not identify what you are going to do with or say about your topic.

**Subject headings:** The controlled vocabulary terms chosen by experts under which books and articles are described, organized, and arranged in library catalogs and databases. Items with the same subject heading are about the same topic; therefore, finding and using subject headings is a very powerful way to locate more information about a topic efficiently and effectively. Subject headings in periodical databases are sometimes called by other names, such as “descriptors.”

**Style Manual:** A book or Web page that prescribes how different materials used in research should be listed in a bibliography or Works Cited page. The most commonly used style manuals are those from the Modern Language Association (MLA), the American Psychological Association (APA), and the *Chicago Manual of Style* (CMS).

**Thesis Statement:** A brief statement, usually located in the introduction of a persuasive essay or speech, that articulates the main idea and sets out what the writer or speaker aims to prove.

**Thesaurus:** (1) A book of synonyms, antonyms, and alternate terms. (2) A list of controlled vocabulary used by some databases to help pinpoint search terms for more efficient searching.

**Topic:** The main thought or subject of a paragraph, book, or research paper. Often topics consist of several different concepts or ideas that might be broken down into keywords in the search for information about them.

**Truncation:** A search strategy used in online catalogs and periodical databases to truncate, or shorten, a term using a symbol in order to find variables. For example, a keyword search in the Shapiro Library’s online catalog for temple? will return hits for both “temple” and “temples.” Truncation symbols may vary in different tools; be sure to check the Help feature for more details. See also wildcard.

**TurnItIn.com:** A Web-based resource accessible through Blackboard and available by license to SNHU faculty and students that assists in assessing papers for possible plagiarism. Students can use Turnitin to evaluate their papers for possible plagiarism and professors can use it to check papers for plagiarism.

**Unknown item:** an item of information about which you know little or nothing, as opposed to a known item. A keyword search is best used to identify unknown items. For example, if you are searching a periodical database for an unspecified article on “violence,” you’re looking for an unknown item.

**URL:** “Uniform Resource Locator” commonly called the “address” of a Web page.

**Wiki:** A website or similar online resource that allows users to add and edit content collectively. Wikis on the Web that can be edited by anyone, such as Wikipedia, are generally not considered scholarly sources appropriate for university research.

**Wildcard:** A symbol used in online catalogs and periodical databases to stand in for an unknown character in a term. For example, a keyword search in the Shapiro Library’s online catalog for behavior\*r will return hits for both “behavior” and “behaviour.” Wildcard symbols may vary in different tools; be sure to check the Help feature for more details. See also truncation.

**Works Cited:** In the MLA Style Manual, the list of citations of works that were actually cited in a research paper, project, or presentation. Sometimes used interchangeably “bibliography” to describe the list of sources used in research.

**WWW/Internet:** Often (erroneously) used interchangeably with “the Internet,” the World Wide Web, or simply “the Web,” is the total accumulation of all the pages of electronic information that can be accessed via a browser. Information found on the Web needs careful evaluation before being included in university research.