

## Useful Glossary

### **Abstract**

A summary of an article. An abstract usually appears at the beginning of a scholarly or technical article. Databases and indexes often contain abstracts that can help you decide whether an article is relevant for your purposes.

### **Annotated bibliography**

A list of sources that gives the publication information and a short description — or annotation — for each source. In some bibliographies the annotation merely describes the content and scope of the source; in others the annotation also evaluates the source's quality and usefulness.

### **Anthology**

A collection of writings (considered as short works) compiled into a book (considered as a long work).

### **Bibliography**

(1) A list of sources, usually appearing at the end of a research paper, an article, a book, or a chapter in a book. The list documents evidence used in the work and points out sources that might be useful for further research. Each entry provides publication information for each source so that an interested reader can **track down** the source.

(2) A list of recommended readings on a given topic, usually sorted into subcategories.

### **Citation**

A reference to a book, article, Web page, or other source that provides enough information to allow a reader to retrieve the source. Citations in a paper must be given in a standard format (such as MLA, APA, *Chicago*, or CSE), depending on the discipline in which the paper is written.

### **Citation trail**

The network of citations formed when a reference work refers to sources that in turn refer to additional sources. The process used by researchers to track down additional sources on a topic is sometimes referred to as following the path of a "citation trail" or "citation network."

### **Cite**

(1) As a verb, to provide a reference to a source.

(2) As a noun, a shortened form of *citation*. (*Note*: This term is frequently misused when referring to Web *sites*.)

### **Corporate author**

An organization, an agency, an institution, or a corporation identified as an author of a work.

## **Database**

A collection of data organized for retrieval. In libraries, databases usually contain references to sources retrievable by a variety of means. Databases may contain bibliographic citations, descriptive abstracts, full-text documents, or a combination.

## **Discipline**

An academic field of study such as history, psychology, or biology. Often books and articles published by members of a discipline and intended for other scholars are called *the literature of the discipline* — referring not to literary expression but to research publications in the field.

## **Field**

(1) An area of study within an academic discipline.

(2) A particular area in a database in which the same type of information is regularly recorded. One field in an article database may contain the titles of articles, for example, while another field may contain the names of journals the articles are in. Some search engines allow a user to limit a search to one or more specific fields.

## **Index**

(1) In a book, the alphabetical listing of topics and the pages on which information about them can be found. The index is located at the back of the book.

(2) An alphabetical listing of elements that can be found in a database.

## **Journal**

A type of periodical usually sold by subscription and containing articles written for specialized or scholarly audiences.

## **Literature review (review of the literature)**

A survey of published research on a particular topic. The purpose of a literature review (sometimes called a *review article*) is to select the most important publications on the topic, sort them into categories, and comment on them so that a researcher can gain a quick overview of the state of the art in that area. Published articles often include a literature review section to place their research in the context of other work in the field.

## **Magazine**

A type of periodical containing articles that are usually written for general and popular audiences. Magazines are sold on newsstands or by subscription and earn a part of their revenue through advertising.

## **Peer review**

A process during which a group of experts examine a document to determine whether it is worthy of publication. Journals and other publications use a peer review process — usually arranged so that reviewers do not know who the author of the document is — to filter articles for quality and relevance. *See also* **refereed publication**.

## **Periodical**

A publication issued at regular intervals. Periodicals may be magazines, journals, newspapers, or newsletters.

## **Plagiarism**

The unattributed use of a source of information that is not considered common knowledge. Forms of plagiarism are failure to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, failure to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, failure to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words, and submission of someone else's work as your own.

## **Primary source**

An original source, such as a speech, diary, novel, legislative bill, laboratory study, field research report, or eyewitness account. While not necessarily more reliable than a secondary source, a primary source has the advantage of being closely related to the information it conveys and as such is often considered essential for research, particularly in history.

## **Professional journal**

A journal containing scholarly articles addressed to a particular professional audience such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, or accountants. Professional journals differ from trade publications, which usually do not include in-depth research articles.

## **Refereed publication**

A publication for which every submission is screened through a peer review process. Refereed publications are considered authoritative because unbiased experts have reviewed the material in advance of publication to determine its quality.

## **Reference**

(1) A source used in research and mentioned by a researcher in a paper or an article. (2) *Reference books*: In libraries, a part of the library's collection that includes encyclopedias, handbooks, directories, and other publications that are useful for finding overviews of information and facts.

## **Scholarly (academic) journal**

Scholarly journals tend to be refereed publications and for some purposes may be considered more authoritative than magazines. Scholarly journals tend to have articles that are substantial in length, use specialized language, contain footnotes or endnotes, and are written by academic researchers rather than by journalists.

## **Secondary source**

A source that comments on, analyzes, or otherwise relies on primary sources. An article in a newspaper that reports on a scientific discovery or a book that analyzes a writer's work is a secondary source.

## **Subject heading**

A word or phrase assigned to an item in a database to describe the item's content. This content information can help a researcher evaluate whether a book or an article is worth further examination. Subject headings also suggest alternative terms or phrases to use in a search.

## **URL (uniform resource locator)**

An Internet address. Most URLs consist of a protocol type (such as *http* or *telnet*), a domain name and an extension of letters and/or numbers to identify an exact resource or page within the domain.