List of Terms Used in the Library

A
Abstract
An abstract is a summary of an article or book. It is usually a paragraph long and can help students to determine if the article or book has information they need, thus saving time.

Adobe Reader®
Adobe Reader® is software that is used to read PDF files. (See “PDF.”)
Go to http://www.adobe.com for a free download. Some documents will not load if the computer has an outdated version of Adobe Reader® installed.

Annotated bibliography
A list of source information (citations) used in a written work such as an essay, article or a book is an annotated bibliography. It contains additional content for each item, such as explanatory notes.

APA citation style
Students of the social sciences (history, government, and psychology, for example) and allied health and nursing usually use “APA style” to construct their references list and parenthetical citations. APA guidelines are published in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

B
Bibliography
A bibliography is a list of the sources used in the preparation of a work such as an essay, research report, book or scholarly article. The bibliography is called the “Works Cited” in MLA citation style and “References” in APA style. See also “Annotated Bibliography.”

Boolean operators (connectors)
Words used to combine search terms are called Boolean operators. Use and to require that all search terms be present. Use or to require that at least one of the terms be present. An example would be if you were looking for articles about poverty that also include children. Search for the phrase “poverty and children.” Another example would be if you were searching for articles about bird flu. Not to miss any articles, you might search for the phrase “bird flu or avian flu or avian influenza.”

C
Call number
The AC Library uses the Dewey Decimal system. Books on similar subjects are grouped together on the shelf by means of their call numbers, which are codes composed of numbers and letters. They are commonly affixed to the spine or front of the item. The library’s online catalog lists each item’s call number, which helps you find it in the library. A staff member can assist you, as well. Most of AC’s books are on the fourth floor of the Lynn Library or shelved among the public library books at the West Campus. Note that other libraries may use the Library of Congress classification system and call numbers will be different from Dewey call numbers.
Circulation
The Circulation Desk is the area in the library where students and others obtain library cards and check out and return items. At the AC Lynn Library, it is on the fourth floor. On the AC West campus, these activities are done at the circulation desk of the jointly occupied Northwest Branch of the Amarillo Public Library/AC West Campus Library.

Citation
A citation is information identifying a publication, whether in hardcopy or electronic form. It typically includes the author’s name, the title, date of publication, and other publication information. The bibliography or references list section at the end of a journal article, book, Web page, or student’s paper will list citations of sources. The two styles used most often at AC are MLA and APA.

Copy card
A copy card is a thin plastic card that is used with the public copy machines in the AC Lynn Library. Cards are available at the Circulation Desk and at the student computer lab. A fee is required.

D
Database
A library research database is an online collection of related information. The library’s electronic databases contain thousands of articles from journals, magazines, reference books, and other sources. Examples of journal databases are Academic Search Complete and CINAHL.

Depository libraries
The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) was established by Congress to ensure that the American public has access to its Federal Government's information. The FDLP provides government information at no cost to designated depository libraries throughout the country and territories. These depository libraries, in turn, provide local, no-fee access to government information in an impartial environment with professional assistance. West Texas A&M University in Canyon is the nearest selective depository library. See also “Government Documents.”

Dictionary
A dictionary can be a list of words and their definitions but can also be a specialized reference book listing terms or names pertaining to a particular subject. An example would be The Oxford Dictionary of Opera.

E
E-book
An e-book is an electronic book. It is typically a digitized version of a book that has first been published in hardcopy. (See also “NetLibrary.”)

EBSCO
EBSCO is a database company that has created a number of popular databases such as Academic Search Complete.

Embargo
An embargo is the length of time that a few publishers of journals will not allow online access. It is typically six months to a year following publication in print. The full content of articles is sometimes unavailable due to embargoes.
Encyclopedia

An encyclopedia is commonly thought of as a series of books that cover all the various branches of knowledge, such as *World Book*. However, an encyclopedia can also be a specialized book (or set of books) dealing with only a particular subject or branch of knowledge. An example would be *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Science & Technology*. An online example would be the database, *Encyclopedia of Animals*.

F

Field

A field is part of a record in a database. The record contains all information available in the database about individual items such as articles. Database fields are searchable. Common library database fields include author, title, abstract, subject terms, and publication year.

Full-text

When a journal or magazine article is available on a database in full-text, it means the *whole* article is available online, and not just the abstract or summary.

G

Government documents

Government agencies have websites providing a storehouse of valuable information to students. Great websites with government documents include [www.gpo.gov](http://www.gpo.gov), [www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov), [www.tracer2.com](http://www.tracer2.com), [www.fedstats.gov](http://www.fedstats.gov), and thousands more.

H

Hardcopy

Hardcopy is material that is printed.

HTML

HTML (HyperText Markup Language) documents are in electronic form and can be found on Web sites and Web pages but are also available in library databases. Unlike PDF documents, they are composed of straight text and don’t look like magazines or journals. However, they sometimes have links to photographs, sounds, and other text.

I

Information Literacy

Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.

An information literate individual is able to:

- Determine the extent of information needed
- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Incorporate selected information into one’s knowledge base
- Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
• Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally

**Interlibrary Loan**
When you need books or articles for a class and they are unavailable from the AC library’s print collection or its online databases, they may be obtained through interlibrary loan. Contact your local public library for this service. Ask if there is a fee and approximately how long it will take.

**J**
**Journal**
A journal is a periodical with scholarly or academic articles. Journals are usually peer-reviewed. (See “Peer-reviewed.”)

**K**
**Keyword**
Keywords are descriptive words found in the title, abstract, introductory text, or subject terms list. A keyword search done in a database or online catalog can yield thousands of articles or books for a researcher. Be aware that in library databases, the search usually does not include the entire body of an article.

**L**
**Library card**
Cards are issued by a library to identify those persons who meet qualifications for borrowing materials and using the library’s facilities. AC students may use the card they’ve been using at their local Panhandle Area Harrington Library Consortium member library, or an AC library card may be made for them. Picture ID and proof of current address and AC affiliation are required.

**Literature databases**
Literature databases contain literary criticism, author biographies, and articles from literary journals, literary encyclopedias, and reference works (such as *Masterplots*). They are of special interest to students in English classes.

**M**
**MLA citation style**
“MLA” stands for the Modern Language Association. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* sets the rules of “MLA style.” Students of literature, the arts, and philosophy typically build their Reference list and parenthetical citations using “MLA.”

**Magazine**
A magazine is a general interest periodical with articles directed to a general audience, not scholars. Magazines are not peer-reviewed.

**N**
**NetLibrary**
NetLibrary provides access to AC Library’s e-books and is available around the clock to current students, faculty, and staff. Login is required.
Online catalog

The library’s online catalog is the database that monitors all the items that the library owns. Thousands of library items can be explored using author, title, keyword, and subject searches with the online catalog. AC Library’s online catalog is capable of searching the holdings of most libraries in the Texas Panhandle except West Texas A&M University’s Cornette Library and the Texas Tech Health Science Center library.

PDF

PDF (Portable Document Format) documents are in electronic form and look like photocopies of hardcopy materials. In a library research database, they are usually scanned and linked from the article record in the database.

Peer-reviewed

When an article submitted to a journal has been sent to subject matter experts and approved for publication, it is said to be “peer-reviewed.” Such journals are considered “scholarly” and the articles are generally of very high quality.

Periodicals

Publications that are produced regularly, such as daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly, are called periodicals. Examples include magazines, journals, newspapers, and newsletters.

Plagiarism

“Plagiarism’ shall be defined as the appropriating, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one’s own written work." Source: 2008-09 Student Rights and Responsibilities, Amarillo College

Primary source

A primary source is an original document. Examples are photographs, diaries, letters, first-hand accounts, and legal documents.

Public domain

When something is in the public domain, the information, image, etc., is available at no cost for anyone to use. Publications in the public domain must be cited as a source even though their copyrights may have expired.

Reference book

For general information about a topic, consult a reference book. Examples are dictionaries, encyclopedias, almanacs, atlases, bibliographies, and directories. Reference books are generally not to be checked out; copiers are available to make needed photocopies. Many reference books, such as Short Story Criticism, are available through the library’s databases.

Reserve Desk

The staff at the Reserve Desk administers library materials for the students to use, often on a short-term basis. The materials are typically items such as tests, notes, books, videos, and other sources of information that an instructor wants to make available to his or her students. Items that are meant for use only within the building still must be checked out using a library card. Some of the materials may be photocopied; a copy
machine is close by and the staff sells copy cards. At the AC Lynn Library, the reserve
desk is on the fourth floor. At the AC West Campus, the reserve desk is within the AC
Library Services area inside the Northwest Branch of Amarillo Public Library.

S

Scholarly journal
Researchers and experts write articles that are often published in scholarly journals. The
intended audience includes professionals, researchers, educators, and scholars.
Sometimes college instructors require one or more sources of a student’s paper to be a
scholarly journal. (See “Peer-reviewed.”)

Search engine
A search engine is a computer program that searches for and identifies items online that
correspond to search words specified by the user. They are used especially for finding
particular content on the Internet. Google, Yahoo!, BING, and Ask.com are popular
search engines. Internet search engines do not retrieve most information found in
licensed, fee-based library databases.

Search strategy
The different methods of locating online sources make up a search strategy. It includes
the search terms used and the search techniques used, as well as the databases and
websites visited.

Secondary source
A secondary source is a published document that analyzes and expands upon or
summarizes information found in one or more primary sources. Examples include
biographies, encyclopedias, and journal articles.

Stacks
When librarians tell you an item is in the stacks, they mean it’s on a library shelf and
usually may be borrowed. Some libraries have closed stacks and an employee must
retrieve the book or magazine for you.

Subject guide
A subject guide is a list of sources with information about a particular field of study. AC
Library online subject guides typically include information from hard copy sources,
electronic books, websites, and library databases.

Subject heading
Subject headings are given to items such as books or articles to describe the content.
There are official lists of subjects used by book catalogers and database vendors. They
may also be called “controlled vocabulary” or “thesaurus terms.” Searching the databases
using subject headings is very useful. You may also use keywords or synonyms of the
major concept.

Syllabus
A syllabus is an instructor’s outline of a course, usually distributed to students during the
first week of classes. Often included are a list of textbooks required, reading assignments,
project guidelines, deadlines, grading criteria, and other items of importance to the
student.
T

**Truncation**
By cutting off or truncating the end of a word at its root and substituting a symbol, researchers can broaden a search and retrieve all forms of a word. For example, “comput*” will retrieve articles containing the words “compute,” “computes,” “computer,” “computers,” “computation,” “computations,” and “computerization.” The asterisk (*) is the most common truncation symbol.

**Tutorial**
Traditionally, a tutorial was a one-on-one session with a librarian. Increasingly, students take advantage of online tutorials which provide step-by-step instruction about general library procedures, research skills, and database searching.

U

**URL**
A URL (Uniform Resource Locator) is the location or address of an Internet site.

W

**Writing Lab**
The AC English Writing Labs provide limited peer tutoring or peer editing. The staff gives make-up exams, essays, and quizzes. They do instruction on MLA formatting and brief computer instruction and provide help with citations and Works Cited.