

Library Terminology

Abstract

- A brief summary of the contents of a book, article, dissertation, etc. A good abstract should provide the main points of the article or book in the order in which they were written, but does not have any literary value itself.

Boolean

- Developed by an English mathematician, Boolean operators allow you to expand or narrow your search.
AND between 2 words narrows your search.
NOT between 2 words narrows the search by excluding a term
OR between 2 words expands the search

Call number

- A code printed on the spine of a book or DVD that gives the item a unique place in the collection. Stony Brook Libraries use the Library of Congress Classification system which assigns specific letters followed by numbers to the items

Citation

- A written reference to a particular work which enables the user to find this exact work. Usually a citation contains author, title, date, journal in which the article is to be found and the volume, issue and page number of the article.

Database

- A database provides access to 1000s of abstracts and full text journal articles. Many databases cover a specialized topic e.g. PsychInfo.

Interlibrary Loan (ILL)

- Interlibrary loan is a service provided by a library to its patrons to obtain books, journal articles etc. that are not available in the home library. To obtain an interlibrary loan the patron needs to provide full bibliographic information for the item in order for the interlibrary loan department to be able to locate the items elsewhere.

Keyword

- A significant word or search term that will search all parts of a record the title, subject headings and text of a database or catalog entry to find books or journal articles with that word in it.

OPAC

- Acronym for Online Public Access Catalog. Use the OPAC called **STARS** at Stony Brook to find books, journals, music, DVDs and other items in the library's collection. STARS is searchable by author, title, keyword, call number, etc.

Peer reviewed

- Journal articles that have been submitted to a scholarly journal, reviewed by colleagues in the academic field and then accepted to be published in that journal.

Reference collection

- Books, e-books and scholarly websites that enable patrons to find specific information without needing to read the book from cover to cover. Examples of reference collection materials include dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks and directories.

Reference desk

- When a library user has a question and needs guidance he/she can come to the reference desk and get help from a reference librarian. The user can also call the reference desk, send email or start a chat session with the librarian.

Search engine

- Software on a computer, which allows the user to enter search terms, and get results from the World Wide Web. e.g. Yahoo, Google.

Search term

- A word or phrase representing one of the main concepts of a research topic. Search terms can be subject headings or keywords and can be combined. (see Boolean)

Subject heading

- The most specific word or phrase, which has been assigned to books, journals articles, etc.

Truncation

- Dropping part of a word at the beginning, middle or end to try and broaden the search. The most common truncation symbol is *. e.g. librar* will search for library, libraries, librarian/s, librarianship etc.