


Library Terms



Abstract – brief summary of an article, book, speech, report, etc.

Article Delivery  If an article or book chapter is in print or microform, the library will scan it or email it to a JMU person free of charge.

Authority – credentials or qualifications, an important criterion when evaluating a source of information

Bibliography – list of references (sources) used in a book or article

Biography – book about a person's life

Boolean operators – AND, OR, NOT used in database searching. AND narrows. OR expands. NOT excludes the term from the search.

Call Number - an identification number assigned to a library book which allows patrons to locate the item in the collection. JMU Libraries use Library of Congress call numbers for their books, which are comprised of letters and numbers, e.g. QL737.C432 R49 2000.

Carrier Library – Located in the Bluestone area of JMU, the original campus library with collections in the social sciences and humanities

Citation – Information which fully identifies a publication; a complete citation usually includes author, title of article, source journal, volume, date and pages (if the citation is to an article) or author, title, publisher, place and date (if to a book). A citation is also called a reference.

Critical review - A review is a critical evaluation. By reading reviews, you can determine the quality of a book, movie, product, or musical recording.

Database – an organized collection of information that can be searched. From JMU Libraries web site, you can look in “Research Databases” to search for articles and other materials on your topic.

Delivery Service – See Library Delivery

ECL – East Campus Library, the new library located in the Skyline area of JMU with collections primarily in science, technology, and health

Electronic journal – a journal whose issues are online – just like the print version, but online

Field – a place where a particular bit of information is stored in a database (also see Record). For example: author field, title field

FLEX – a monetary account connected to a JACard that pays for services such as library printing and copying.

Full-text database – contains the partial or complete text of works, such as articles, books, poems, and essays

General encyclopedia – an encyclopedia, like *World Book*, that covers all subject areas

Government document - any publication issued by local, state, national, or international governments, including laws and regulations

Interlibrary loan – a service by which the library will borrow or obtain copies of materials from other libraries for patrons who need them.


Internet - an interconnected system of networks connecting computers around the world. Many information resources are available through the Internet including public websites and library research databases.

JACard – JMU Access Card issued to students, staff, and faculty of JMU. Also see FLEX.

Journal – a periodical containing scholarly articles written by authorities or experts in a given field of study. Scholarly journal articles usually have a bibliography or list of references at the end.

Keyword search – In a database, a user can type in important terms related to a topic and retrieve items that have the words in the title, subject headings, or abstract.

LEO – is the name of JMU's online library catalog. Use it to find books, nonprint media, and government documents.

Library Delivery – JMU Libraries provides a delivery service for books and media from one campus library to another. Requests can be made through the LEO catalog but clicking the  button.

Magazine – a periodical written for the general public with the purpose of informing and entertaining.

Microform/microfilm/microfiche – publications that are photographed, reduced in size, and placed on transparent rolls of transparent film or sheets of fiche.

Nesting – use of parentheses in a keyword search to group terms (Example: treatment AND (anorexia OR bulimia))

Newspaper – a daily or weekly publication on folded sheets that contains news, articles and advertisements. Most are now online.

Peer-review – A peer-reviewed or refereed journal is one in which manuscripts submitted by authors are reviewed by experts on the topic before being accepted for publication in the journal.

Periodical – publication issued at regular intervals, such as a magazine, newspaper or journal

Periodical Locator – database for finding out if a periodical is in JMU Libraries or accessible online.

Phrase Searching – searching a database for words in a specific order of occurrence, such as “birth order”

Plagiarism - stealing someone else's ideas and presenting them as your own, or not citing your sources.

Primary source - an account by an eyewitness of an event, such as diaries, letters, minutes of meetings, news footage, newspaper articles; data obtained through original research; creative works such as poetry, music, or art

Record – in a database, all the information for a given item (book or article). Records usually contain fields.

Refereed journal – A peer-reviewed or refereed journal is one in which manuscripts submitted by authors are reviewed by experts on the topic before being accepted for publication in the journal.

Reference – area where library patrons may consult reference books and ask for assistance

Reserves – area where library patrons may check out items put on reserve by a professor

Search strategy – an organized plan for gathering information

Secondary source - works that interpret the primary data, such as a book about eating disorders, a journal article about the role of tobacco in colonial economy, or a critical review of a play.

Specialized encyclopedia – an encyclopedia that deals with a particular subject area, such as psychology or literature

Stack guide – the chart that tells where in the libraries a particular call number is located

Stacks – the area in a library where books from the general collection are shelved

Style manual – a guide to citing publications properly

Subject search – a search in a database that utilizes subject headings from the database thesaurus

Thesaurus A list of all the subject headings or descriptors used in a particular database.

Truncation – use of a word root and wild card symbol to pick up alternate endings in a keyword search. Example: cultur* will retrieve culture, cultures, cultural, etc.