Weird Research Jargon!?

Did you know that lots of people are confused by libraries & research, to the point that there is an official term for this: *Library Anxiety!* It’s pretty standard to feel like everyone else knows exactly how to find a variety of quality sources and incorporate them ethically into their own work (Hint: Not true! There’s always more to learn).

Here is an A-Z list of some terms you might recognize, or not. When you have questions, you can always ask at the InfoBar, or email a librarian at askharold@hampshire.edu

**Abstract**  A short description of an article, which you can read to find out if the article will be useful to you. An abstract is often provided along with the citation to an article. It’s similar to the blurb on the back of a book, which tells you what the book is about.

**Archives** 1. A place where historical or public records are stored and preserved. 2. The historical or public records themselves, which are often unique materials such as collections of personal papers, diaries, photographs, rare books, ephemera, etc. Archival materials can often, but not always, be considered **Primary Sources**.

**Article**  A piece of writing, much shorter than a book, on a relatively focused topic, generally between 1 and 35 pages in length. Often published as part of a scholarly journal, magazine, or newspaper. There are many different types of scholarly journal articles, such as case studies, review articles, or primary research articles.

**Author**  The person(s) or organization(s) that wrote or compiled a document. Looking for information under its author's name is one option in searching. Other options are by Title, Keyword, or Subject. Historically, card catalogs had three cards for each book, so they could be found 1) based on the Author’s last name, 2) in order alphabetically by title, or 3) by browsing within a certain subject heading, such as *blueberries – nutrition* (along with all other books about the vitamins or health aspects of eating or cooking with berries that are blue).

**Bibliography**  A list containing citations to the books, articles or other source materials used in writing a research paper or other document (“biblio” = book, “graphy” = writing). See also: **Reference**. You may have an **Annotated Bibliography** assignment at some point, for which you collect & read some articles, then create a list of citations with a paragraph below each one describing its main points or findings, and how it would be useful for your own research.
**Call Number** A group of letters and/or numbers that identifies a specific item in a library and provides a way for organizing library holdings by subject (history, mathematics) and type of material (literature, graphic novels). Hampshire College Library uses Library of Congress Call Numbers (as do most academic libraries in the US). LoC call numbers look like this: PR 6068.O93 H372 1999 and they correspond to shelf labels upstairs in the HC Stacks. For help finding a book by its call number, stop by the InfoBar or ask a Librarian.

**Check Out** To borrow an item from a library for a fixed period of time in order to read, listen to, or view it. Check-out periods vary by library. You can check out items at the circulation desk (here we also call it the InfoBar) using your Hamp ID. Make sure to listen for the due date.

**Circulation** The place in the library, often a desk, where you check out, renew, and return library materials (it’s where books “circulate” in and out). You may also place a hold, report an item missing from the shelves, or pay late fees or fines there.

**Citation** A reference to a book, magazine or journal article, or other work containing all the information necessary to identify and locate that work. A citation to a book includes its author's name, title, publisher and place of publication, and date of publication. Citations for journal articles also include volume and issue information. There are a few citation styles depending on which discipline you favor: Chicago style (the arts), MLA (literature), or APA (social sciences) are some common styles.

**Database** A collection of information stored in an electronic format that can be searched by a computer. Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, and Project MUSE are examples of academic databases that Hampshire College Library subscribes to, and you can search them to find scholarly articles that might be useful for your research. You can search through multiple databases at once by using the Discover Search on the library website.

**E-book (or Electronic book)** An electronic version of a book that can be read on a computer or phone. You can find the full text of many ebooks in the Library Catalog.

**Full Text** A complete electronic copy of a resource, usually an article, viewed on a computer display screen. This is often a PDF that you can download, or an HTML file.

**Index** 1. In a scholarly book, sometimes there is an index at the end, providing a list of names or topics that directs you to the pages where those names or topics are discussed within the publication. 2. An index can also refer to a database or other publication that helps you identify which citations or publications might be available on a certain topic, so you can look them up.
Journal  A publication, similar to a magazine in that it is issued on a regular basis, but different in that it contains scholarly research published as articles, papers, research reports, or technical reports. Magazines, Journals and Newspapers are sometimes also called Periodicals.

Keyword  A significant or memorable word or term in the title, abstract, or text of an information resource. This is one way to search for an article. For example, if you enter the keywords Bluebirds and Nests in the library catalog, you will get all books that mention not only Bluebirds, but also the word Nests, somewhere in the record for the book. You can also try Bluebirds and (Nests or Housing or Homes) if you’re not sure what the right wording is.

See also a different way of searching: Subject Headings (an official subject heading would be Bluebirds – Housing, for all books about where bluebirds might live, no matter how it’s worded in the record).

Library Catalog  The library catalog is a database which lists and briefly describes the books, journals, government documents, audiovisual and other materials held by a library. Each item has its own record with information about the subject and contents. Various search terms allow you to look for items in the catalog, and you can search by title, author’s last name, or find out what course reserves your professor has set aside for the class. You can search through all the 5 Colleges at once, or just search through what Hampshire has here.

Magazine  A publication, issued on a regular basis, containing articles written and usually illustrated in a less technical, more entertaining way than the articles found in a journal. The New Yorker and Popular Mechanics are examples of magazines. (The New England Journal of Medicine is an example of a scholarly journal).

Microform  A reduced-sized photographic reproduction of printed information on reel to reel film (microfilm) or film cards (microfiche) or opaque pages that can be read with a microform reader/printer. We still have a microfilm reader upstairs- it’s sort of cool to try using!

Patron  Sometimes library staff call people who use the library “Patrons.” This is probably left over from back when libraries used to charge a fee for access, so anyone who came into the library was considered a “library patron” or supporter of the library. It is very rare now, in the United States, for college or public libraries to charge money for access, as this is thought to be discriminatory. Librarians want to make sure everyone has free access to the information they need!

Peer-reviewed journal  Some scholarly publishers require a peer review process to check for quality and lack of biases before an article or book can be published. The editor will ask experts in a field to review submissions by people with similar subject knowledge (an article written by a biologist will go through a review by other biologists, usually anonymously, to make sure it is not a faulty study). Peer review is one way, not the only way, to ensure high
quality. Peer-reviewed journals are also called refereed or scholarly journals.

**Primary source** An original record of events, such as a diary, a newspaper article, a public record, or scientific documentation of a study that was conducted. Any source that is as close to the event or person as possible can be considered a primary source. (Sources that use primary sources and comment on them or synthesize them to discuss major themes are called Secondary Sources, such as review articles, non-fiction books, etc.).

**Reference** 1. A service that helps people find the information they need. Many libraries have “Reference Desks,” where you can ask questions (here, you can ask at the InfoBar). 2. Sometimes "reference" refers to the reference collection in a library, which is where you can find encyclopedias, indexes, handbooks, directories, etc. full of general background knowledge. 3. A citation to a book or article is also known as a reference because it helps the reader to “refer” back to the original source.

**Renewal** A lengthening of the loan period for library materials. You can log in to your account on the Hampshire College Library Catalog to renew your books and keep them for longer, unless someone else wants the book, and places a “hold” on it. Then you will get an email asking you to bring it back soon. (Sharing is caring.)

**Reserves** Sometimes also called “Course Reserves.” This is a library service providing short-term access to required or optional course-related materials (book or article readings, lecture notes, sample tests, etc.). Here at Hampshire, you can search the library catalog (find the tab for reserves) or you can ask at the InfoBar.

**Serial** Publications such as journals, magazines and newspapers that are generally published multiple times per year, month, or week. Serials usually have number volumes and issues. The words journal, magazine, periodical, and serial may be used interchangeably, so it’s important to ask your professor what types of sources, specifically, they are asking you to use.

**Stacks** Shelves in the library where materials—typically books—are stored. If you search through the library catalog for a book, you can go to the 2nd or 3rd floor to find books that have the location of “HC Stacks” (i.e. on the shelves here at Hampshire College). You can find books based on their Call Numbers, which have a 1 or 2 letter code at the beginning. The first half of the alphabet is on the 2nd floor, and the last half is on the 3rd floor but there are signs near stairways and elevators to remind you. “AC Stacks” means it’s at Amherst College, “MH Stacks” means Mount Holyoke, etc.

**Subject Headings** Often books, articles, and other information is given an official “Subject Heading” by a librarian or cataloger, to help patrons find all books that are about a certain subject. Most academic colleges, including Hampshire, use the Library of Congress Classification System, if you want to learn more about it.