Included on this page are some common terms you may run across while gathering research.

**Abstract:** A brief summary of the main ideas of a book, article, or other document with information on the title, publication, publisher and date to help you find a copy of the book, article, or document.

**And:** A Boolean operator used to narrow a search by specifying that the all the terms or phrases connected by AND be present in the retrieved results.

**Annotated Bibliography:** A bibliography that includes a brief description of each article or book listed. The description should help the reader evaluate the content and usefulness of each item.

**Author field:** The area in a record in a database where the author or authors are listed.

**Authoritative:** A source of information that is written by an expert in a given field of study. An expert will have more weight (more likely to be believed) than a lay person (non-expert).

**Bias:** A reason a book, article, or other material is written. Bias is not bad, but may influence the reader to believe a certain way. If you can remove the bias you are able to look at just the point (arguments) of the piece to discover if they are sound or not, and then be able to make an independent decision.

**Bibliographic Record:** An individual record in a database that describes and identifies a specific item (such as a book or journal) by fields (e.g. titles, author, publication, date, etc.).

**Bibliography (Work Cited):** A list of citations for books, periodicals, or other materials on a given topic usually found at the end of scholarly articles, books, or research papers. See “Citation”.

**Boolean Logic (operators):** The connectors AND, OR, NOT used to combine keywords or subjects to narrow, broaden, or limit results.

**Bound Periodical:** Several volumes of a magazine or journal title that are bound together under one hard cover so that the work appears to be a book-like.
**Catalog:** Using a standard format, it is a listing of what the library owns and where it is located. Most catalogs are now online or computerized.

**Citation:** Information that fully indentifies a publication. A complete citation usually includes: author, title, name of journal (if an article) or publisher (if to a book) or internet address or URL (if to a web site), and date. Two most common formats are; Modern Language Association (MLA) and American Psychological Association (APA).

**Classification System:** Used by libraries to arrange materials by subject using an alpha-numeric code. The Dewey Decimal and Library of Congress are the frequently used systems. The LRC uses the Library of Congress system.

**Contextual Meaning:** a term that has unique meaning with a trade or field of study.

**Controlled Vocabulary:** A listing of terms which must be used as subject headings or descriptors in a particular database.

**Copyright:** Legal privilege granted to an author, composer, etc. for exclusive rights of publication and distribution of a work.

**Cross Reference:** A term used in catalogs, thesauri, and indexes to lead you from one heading or entry to another. Usually prefaced by the words See, See also (SA), Use, Use for (UF), Broader term (BT), Narrower term (NT).

**Currency:** The date when a book, article, or work is written. A good rule of thumb is: for Argument papers you may use both if you are going to compare past and present issues, for Informative papers use only current material (things change, using old information can mislead your audience), for Historical papers use both recent and older material (historical points of view change, so using both can reflect the change). If you can not find a publish or updated date (especially on a web page) you may not want to look for better sources.

**Database:** An organized collection of computer records in a standardized format that can store, retrieve, and search for information in a variety of ways.

**Fields:** Individual areas of information on a database record (i.e. title, subject, author, etc.).

**Format:** The manner in which information is presented (i.e. print, audiovisual, electronic, etc.).

**Full-text:** The entire text of the article has been entered into the database.

**Hits:** The number of results returned for a search.
**Index:** An alphabetical list of names, places, and subjects covered in a book, journal, or collection and will give page number(s) on which item is mentioned.

**Information Literacy:** The ability to find, evaluate, and use information effectively. It requires decision making, problem solving, or the acquisition of knowledge.

**Interlibrary Loan (ILL):** A service which allows faculty, staff, and students to borrow materials from other libraries.

**Journal:** A publication containing articles written by acknowledged experts in the field. Often journals will contain bibliographies and are peer-reviewed. Expert opinion will lend believability to facts presented.

**Keyword Searching:** Allows you to retrieve information in a database by using a word or phrase. Keywords can be used in a general search (free-text) or in specific fields, such as title or subject.

**Magazine:** A periodical publication usually considered to be of general or popular interest. Written by lay people (journalists) they general are NOT considered experts in the field, and do not make authoritative sources when writing papers.

**Media:** Material that are presentational and may include equipment.

**Microfiche:** 4x6 sheets of transparent plastic containing micro-images of printed matter. A special machine is used to read images.

**Microfilm:** usually 35mm film that is stored on a reel contained reduced images of printed matter. A special machine is used to read images.

**Natural Language:** A search statement expressed in normal language (i.e. Why is the sky blue?)

**Nesting:** A Boolean search term indicating the order in which operations are to be preformed. Using parentheses indicates group or nest. Operations will be preformed from innermost nest to outermost, and then from left to right.

**Not:** A Boolean operator used to exclude words or phrases from a search.

**Or:** A Boolean operator used to broaden a search by including any of the terms used. Example: cinema OR film OR movie.

**Paraphrase:** Taking an author’s ideas and putting them in your own words. This is more than changing one or two words, but expressing the thought in your understanding of the idea.
**Peer-Reviewed Journal:** A journal containing articles reviewed and selected by professional colleagues for publication.

**Periodical/ Serial:** A magazine, journal, or newspaper published on a regular basis—weekly, monthly, etc.

**Periodical Indexes and Abstracts:** A list of articles that appear in specified journals, magazines, or newspapers. Provided is author, title, name of publication, volume, pages, and date of publication, and may contain summaries of the articles.

**Plagiarism:** Presenting the ideas and/or words of someone else as your own. TSTC, as most colleges have a strong policy against plagiarism.

**Reference:** An area in the library that contains non-circulating materials such as: encyclopedias, indexes, dictionaries, etc.

**Reference Desk:** A service area, usually located near the reference material, where a librarian is available to help find materials, search databases, and answer questions.

**Reserves:** A library service available at the Circulation Desk that manage course materials selected by instructors, and available for in library use.

**Scholarly Journal:** See Peer-Reviewed Journal.

**Scope:** The range of information a book, article, or material cover. The work is considered an overview if it talks about current issues and solutions (usually ranges from a paragraph to one or two pages). The work may be considered broad if it covers; past, present issues, and future predictions.

**S.C.A.B.:** A method of using Scope, Currency, Authority, and Bias to rate a book, journal, or web page for usefulness as an information source.

**Search Statement:** The keywords or phrases used to conduct a search in a database. The Search Statement may contain Boolean operators.

**Search Strategy:** The method used to focus a search on a topic.

**Serial:** A journal, periodical, or magazines that is published in a series or succession of continuous parts at regular intervals.

**Specialty Dictionary:** A dictionary containing terms unique to a trade or field of study. These can be terms with contextual meaning to the trade or field or new terms only used within the trade or field (i.e.; electrical, nursing, etc.)
**Subject Field**: The field in a database record in which the terms, descriptors or subject headings describing the content of the item are located.

**Subject Headings**: Words or phrases given to materials to describe the subject of the work. Finding the correct headings (also called descriptors) of a specific database or catalog is important for effective research. See “Controlled Vocabulary”.

**Thesis Statement**:

**Title Field**: Area of the record in a database where the title or titles are listed.

**Truncation**: The ability to enter part of a keyword, and by inserting a symbol (usually * or ?) and find all possible ending to the word (i.e. talk* = talked, talking, etc.)

**Works Cited**: A page, usually appearing at the end of your paper, which gives complete information on the sources used to obtain information. There are many styles but the most common is the MLA format which has 1 inch margins, the words Work Cited one inch down and centered on the page, double spaced below the title is the first cite (see Cite for information contained in a cite). Each cite is single spaced, with double spacing between cites and in alphabetical order.