Glossary

§: Symbol used for section.

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AACR and AACR2: SEE Anglo-American Cataloging Rules.


AALS: The Association of American Law Schools, non-profit educational association of 172 law schools formed in 1900.

ABA: American Bar Association. Provides law school accreditation, continuing legal education, information about the law, programs to assist lawyers and judges in their work and initiatives to improve the legal system for the public.

Account Churning: Occurs when a company provides unnecessary or an excessive number of updates with very few or minor changes in order to boost the bottom line through additional invoices.


Alabama Rules of Judicial Administration: The rules established and followed by the state’s Judicial System. Often abbreviated as A.R.J.A.

ALCTS: Association for Library Collections & Technical Services.

Amigos Library Services: A not-for-profit membership-based organization for continuing education and vendor discounts.

AMJUR: Commonly used acronym for American Jurisprudence. Encyclopedia of American law published by West with over 140 volumes.

Anglo-American Cataloging Rules: Set of standardized rules for cataloging library materials.


ALCTS: Association for Library Collections & Technical Services; a division of the American Library Association.
**Association Library:** A public library that is privately controlled but meets the statutory definition of a public library in a given state.

**Athenaeum (also spelled Atheneum):** Used in the names of educational institutions including libraries.

**Authentic (law):** The official statute or opinion.

**Authentication (law):** The purpose of document authentication is to ensure that the statute or opinion has not been tampered with, changed, lost, misplaced or deleted from a database. The GPO began digitally signing all public laws in 2009.

**Bar Library:** Private library with membership dues serving lawyers.

**Bench:** Seat occupied by an official, especially a judge.

**Bibliographic Instruction:** Most familiar to academic librarians, bibliographic instruction is the term for training library users to use the library’s resources. It can entail classroom teaching, hand holding and one-on-one training in the library setting, walking a researcher through a complex Boolean search, using a digest, teaching someone to use the OPAC, etc.

**BI:** Commonly used abbreviation for Bibliographic Instruction.

**Black Letter Law:** The principles of law which are generally known and free from doubt or dispute. It can also mean well established case law in America. Often refers to the statutes free of commentary, annotations or other editorial aids.

**Board of Trustees:** Often abbreviated as BOT, this group/organization routinely has governing authority over library and its staff.

**BOT:** SEE Board of Trustees.

**Bunny Trail:** SEE rabbit trail.

**CA:** Certification Authority. An organization that issues digital certificates and maintains a database of certificates available on the internet.

**CALR:** Computer Assisted Legal Research. The process of conducting legal research through a computer rather than print sources.

**Case Law or Caselaw:** The law to be found in the collection of reported cases that form all or part of the body of law within a given jurisdiction.

**Cause of Action:** A group of operative facts giving rise to one or more bases for suing; a factual situation that entitles one person to obtain a remedy in court from another person.

**CCCLL:** SEE Council of California County Law Libraries.

**Certification:** Indicates that the bearer has acquired a minimum skill level.

**Churning:** In security law, the excessive and inappropriate trading of securities for the purpose of earning the stockbroker more commissions.
Citation: SEE legal citation.


CLE: Abbrev. for Continuing Legal Education; To retain their licenses, attorneys are required to take a certain number of continuing education credits annually. Some public law libraries provide continuing education opportunities to the attorneys in their service area.

Codification: The process of systematically organizing and arranging a collection of rules, laws or regulations to give organization to a specific area of law; often involves splitting a session law or enrolled Act into multiple parts and inserting each part into a different section, title or chapter of a Code. Once a statute has been codified, the text of that title becomes legal evidence of the law. Titles that have not been enacted into positive law are only prima facie evidence of the law, in which case, the Statutes at Large govern.

Common Law: The body of law derived from judicial decisions, rather than from statutes or constitutions.

Complaint: The initial pleading that starts a civil action and states the basis for the court’s jurisdiction, the basis for the plaintiff’s claim and the demand to relief.

 Concurrent User: Operating at the same time.

Conflict of Interest: A real or perceived incompatibility between ones private and public interests or between two lawyer’s clients.

Content Management: SEE Knowledge Management.

Council of California County Law Libraries: Commonly abbrev. CCCLL; a state-wide (California) law library consortium.

County Law Library: A public law library under the jurisdiction of the county government or local judiciary at the county level.

Court: Can refer to either the place or the Judge/Jury involved with a specific case.

Court Library: A library attached to a particular court used by the personnel of the court.

Criminal Justice System: System through which an accused passes until the case is disposed or assessed punishment.

CRIV: Committee on Relations with Information Vendors. This is an AALL committee.

DA: District attorney. A public official appointed or elected to represent the state in criminal cases; prosecutor.

Defendant: A person sued in a civil case or accused in a criminal case.

Desiderata File: A “wish list” of future purchases. It is a valuable resource whenever the librarian has an unexpected sum of money and a short period of time in which to spend it.
Dicta: Plural of dictum. A statement of opinion or belief considered authoritative because of the dignity of the person making it.

Digital Curation: Maintaining and adding value to a trusted body of digital information for current and future use.

Digital Rights Management: DRM. Any technology used to limit the use of software, music, movies or other digital data by encrypting the data so it can only be accessed by authorized users.

Direct Cost: Any cost that is identified specifically with a particular final cost objective or that can be easily and conveniently traced to a particular cost objective.

Discovery: Compulsory disclosure, at a party’s request, of information that relates to the litigation of a specific case.

DRM: SEE Digital Rights Management.


Enhanced E-Book: Electronic book that includes live links to resources available through a specific vendor’s proprietary databases.

Federal Library: Any library that is part of the federal government. A federal library may or may not be open to the public. Examples of federal libraries include the Library of Congress, the Supreme Court Library, and the Department of Labor’s Wirtz Labor Library.

Fishing Expedition: When a researcher has a vague idea of the research topic or has failed to narrow the search to a specific issue within the much broader topic.

Flat Rate: A price or payment that does not change up or down.

FOIA: Freedom of Information Act. A federal law first signed in 1966 that allows for the full or partial disclosure of previously unreleased information and documents controlled by the United States government.

FRBR: Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records. A conceptual model of the bibliographic universe created within IFLA to describe entities, relationships, and attributes (metadata).

Functional Library: A library that is staffed by a library-trained para-professional and open to the public.

FY: Standard abbreviation for Fiscal Year.

Governing Authority: This may be a library board, a board of trustees, a library committee, a board of supervisors, County Commissioners, County Judge, city council, city manager, or any other organization that has been placed in a supervisory position over the law library. In many but not all cases, the governing authority is also the parent organization. In the public law library context, a Board of Trustees may be the governing authority but the parent organization is the Township officials. See Parent Organization.
**Government Library**: A library that is part of the federal, state or local government. It may or may not be open to the public. Example of government libraries are judicial libraries, government agency libraries and the Library of Congress.


**Human Catalog**: A phrase often used to describe the use of a library’s staff memory to identify, locate and retrieve materials from an unclassified and uncataloged collection.

**ILL**: Inter-Library Loan. A service where a user in one library can borrow materials or get photocopies of documents that are owned by another library.

**ILS**: SEE Integrated Library System.

**Indirect Cost**: An expense that is not directly accountable to a particular cost center.

**Integrated Library System**: Commonly abbreviated ILS or referred to as a Library Management System (LMS). Library automation software comprising a database of book records and patron records. Software functions include acquisitions, cataloging, circulation, serials, and the OPAC.

**Jail**: Is a local incarceration facility for those convicted of minor crimes, recently arrested and awaiting a Court appearance for a bail hearing, or have been unable to obtain bail and are awaiting trial; usually part of the local (county or municipal) government.

**J.D**: Juris Doctor degree; law degree.

**JP**: SEE Justice of the Peace.

**Judgment**: The final decision by a court in a lawsuit, criminal prosecution, or appeal from lower court’s judgment.

**Judicial System**: System of courts that administer justice; the judiciary.

**Jump Cite**: Specific page number tacked onto the end of a case citation (ex: Tunis Bros. Co. Inc. v. Ford Motor Co., 763 F2d 1482,1498 (3d Cir. 1985) page 1498 is the “jump” as the opinion begins on page 1482).

**Justice of the Peace**: Commonly abbreviated JP. A judicial officer with limited power whose duties may include hearing cases that involve civil controversies, conserving the peace, performing judicial acts, hearing minor criminal complaints, and committing offenders. Jurisdiction is usually limited to a state, city, precinct, county or township.

**Juvenile Justice System**: Courts that handle minors involved in criminal proceedings.

**Kill Code**: Signal built into computer software to stop working at an expiration date or if not renewed.

**KM**: SEE Knowledge Management.
Knowledge Management: Often referred to as KM. A collection of processes used in an organization that oversees the creation, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge. Sometimes referred to as content management.

Law-Lib: Email mailing list of over 4,000 librarians interested in law librarianship. www.law-lib@ucdavis.edu.

Law Library Committee: Most commonly/often, this organization/group fills an advisory role to the public law librarian and the library’s governing authority but may, depending on applicable law and the committee’s relationship to the governing authority be granted supervisory authority over the library and its staff.

Lawsuit: Also called a “suit.” A common term for a legal action by one person or an entity against another person or entity to be decided in a court of law.

Legal Citation: A legal citation is a shorthand method of providing bibliographic information to legal resources. The Bluebook is one of several legal citations titles and the citation preference is normally determined by the Courts in a particular jurisdiction. A case citation provides the case name, volume number, reporter title, page number, and year. For example, the case Johnson v. Avery is cited “Johnson v. Avery, 393 U.S. 483 (1969). Johnson appears in volume 393 of the United States Reports on page 483 and was reported in 1969. An example of the citation for the statutes governing the Library of Congress is 2 U.S.C. 131 et seq. This citation translates to the beginning of section 131 of Title 2 of the United States Code.

Library Fund: Sometimes handled as a trust account, this protected fund is used for a library’s statutory revenues to ensure those monies are spent only on library expenses. It is usually separate from the parent organization’s general fund.

Library Maintenance Agreement: Abbrev. LMA. A Thomson-West® package or bundle program made available to law libraries. It is an agreement that unifies all print subscriptions into a single contract (usually three years) with lower annual increases over the life of the contract.

Library Savings Plan: Abbrev. LSP. A Thomson-West® package or bundle program made available to law libraries. It is an agreement that unifies all print subscriptions into a single contract (usually three years) with lower annual increases over the life of the contract.

License: Confers legal authority to practice a specific profession.

LMA: SEE Library Maintenance Agreement.

Litigant: Any party to a lawsuit – a plaintiff, defendant, petitioner, respondent, cross-complainant and cross-defendant, but not a witness or attorney.

Lock-Out Feature: When this feature is enabled access to an account is denied when the sum value is reached such as number of login attempts or number of simultaneous logins.

Looseleaf: A book or set of books updated by replacing individual pages.
**Long Term Cost:** Refers to the combination of direct, indirect and opportunity costs. It represents a product’s total cost over its expected lifetime.

**LSP:** SEE Library Savings Plan.

**LYRASIS:** Created in 2009 in a merger of PALINET and SOLINET and joined by NELINET. The largest non-profit membership organization serving libraries.

**Motion:** A written or oral application requesting a court to make a specified ruling or order.

**NELLCO:** New England Law Library Consortium.

**Nolo Contendere:** Latin for “I do not wish to contend” often shortened to nolo. No contest. The defendant will not dispute the charge.

**Off-Year:** Another term for non-legislative year. In some states, the state legislature meets every two years rather than annually.

**Official (law):** A public officer or governmental employee who is empowered to exercise judgment.

**Online Public Access Catalog:** A computerized system to catalogue and organize materials in a library and is available to the public. Replaced card catalogues.

**On Point:** A case that is factually similar and legally relevant.

**OPAC:** SEE Online Public Access Catalog.

**Opportunity Cost:** Opportunity cost is expressed in relative price, the price of one choice relative to the price of another.

**Ohio Rev. Code Ann:** Abbreviation for Ohio Revised Code Ann.

**Order:** Every direction or mandate of a judge or a court which is not a judgment or legal opinion directing that something be done or that there is prohibition against some act.

**P-book or pBook:** A printed book.

**Paralegal:** Non-attorney who performs tasks requiring knowledge of the law.

**Parent Organization:** Often the larger governing body such as a corporation, bar association, county or state government department or agency. In the public law library context, the library’s parent organization may be the Bar Association while the governing authority is the Library Committee.- See Governing Authority.

**Pathfinder:** Reference guides intended to help someone get started on researching a particular topic.

**Petition:** A formal written request to a court for an order of the court.

**PIA:** Public Information Act. The right to access government records.

**Plaintiff:** The party who initiates a lawsuit by filing a complaint with the clerk of the court against a defendant demanding damages.
**Pocket Part:** A booklet or pamphlet inserted into the back of a hardbound volume to provide more current information than that found in the volume.

**Positive Law:** Those laws that have been duly enacted by a properly instituted and popularly recognized branch of government.

**Precedent:** A prior reported opinion of an appeals court which establishes the legal rule in the future on the same legal question.

**Preservation:** To keep in perfect or unaltered condition; maintain unchanged. Concerned with maintaining or restoring access to artifacts or documents.

**Prima Facie (law):** Latin for “at first look” or “on its face.”

**Prison:** Usually a state or federally supported facility for those convicted of serious crimes; also known as penitentiary or correctional facility.

**Privilege:** Attorney speak for confidentiality; the term is not normally used by librarians due to its connotation of a contractual agreement between a client and his attorney.

**Pro Bono:** Short for pro bono public. Latin for “for the public good.” Legal work performed for no pay.

**Pro-Se:** Short for *in propria persona* – Latin for self representation – refers to laypeople representing themselves in a court of law; may or may not be hyphenated. Also pro per.

**Proving a Negative:** A phrase that refers to the legal researcher’s occasional need to prove that something does not exist. Because legal research is all about proving something or someone is right or wrong, the need to prove that something does not exist or is not true is often much more difficult and requires much more complex research techniques.

**Public Access License:** Also known as a library license. They generally cost more than the traditional single password license but permit the library to allow the library’s patrons to use the database, CD-ROM or e-book.

**Public Law:** A law affecting the public generally.

**Public Law Library:** Any library with a statutory or institutional mandate to provide the public or/ and self-represented litigant access to legal resource material. The public law library provides services to jail inmates, attorneys, government officials, government employees, the local judicial system, legal professionals and their support staff, law enforcement agencies and their employees, students and the local criminal justice system.

**Public Library:** A non-commercial library often supported with public funds, intended for use by the general public.

**Rabbit Trail:** Sometimes referred to as a bunny trail; refers to going off on a tangent or losing sight of the primary question being researched; phrase is often used by law students and legal professionals during the reference interview in describing part of their research difficulties.
**RFID**: Abbreviation for Radio Frequency Identification. Used to describe a system that transmits the identity of an object or person wirelessly using radio waves.

**RFP**: SEE Request for Proposal.

**Realia**: Three dimensional objects such as coins on display in a library or museum.

**Request for Proposal**: RFP. A public bidding procedure required by the majority of government agencies and departments seeking to purchase goods or services over a previously established amount such as $5,000.00 for a twelve month CALR contract. Some public law libraries may be subject to RFP requirements for even basic goods and services such as CALR, CD-ROM, print, resource bundles, ILS, OPAC or a one-time binding contract.

**Removal of Disabilities of Minority**: Term used in some states to refer to emancipation of a minor child from the authority of his or her parents.

**Reporter (official) (unofficial)**: Set of books of published cases. The official reporter is designated by the Courts; often by the State. Although there may be two or more reporters, only one publisher will have received the “official blessing” and should there be a question as to the accuracy of a published opinion, the version published by the official reporter is usually the one that is relied upon by the Courts. For example, West is the official reporter for the state of Texas, even though Lexis-Nexis also publishes Texas opinions.

**Return on Investment**: A measure used to evaluate the efficiency of an investment or to compare the efficiency of a number of different investments. The benefit of an investment is divided by the cost of the investment and expressed as a percentage or ratio.

**ROI**: SEE Return on Investment.

**SCCLL**: An AALL Special Interest Section – State, Court, County Law Libraries.

**S. D. Codified Laws**: Abbreviation for South Dakota Codified Laws.

**Seat**: Refers to the number of concurrent users permitted access to an electronic resource under a library’s electronic resource contract.

**Sec**: Abbreviation for section; Also abbreviated §.

**Self-Represented Litigant**: Represents oneself in court.

**Self-Represented Litigation Network**: A group of organizations “dedicated to fulfilling the promise of a justice system that works for all, including those who cannot afford lawyers and are therefore forced to go to court on their own.” http://www.srln.org/.

**Session Law**: Newly passed legislation that has not yet been codified, with each individual law placed within the previously existing local, state or federal codes. Because legislation often involves multiple titles (e.g. the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996), codification involves breaking up the original legislation by placing privacy laws in one Title 1, disposal of patient records in Title 11, etc. An example of the session law citation for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
of 1996 would be Pub. L. 104-191, Aug. 21, 1996, 110 Stat. 1936 (1996). This citation indicates that it was the 191st law passed by the 104th Congress on Aug. 21, 1996 and can be found in on page 1936 of volume 110 of the 1996 United States Statutes at Large.

**Shepardize:** The process of ensuring that authorities are still good law.

**Single Password License:** A database or CD-ROM license that restricts use of the product’s password to the individual named on the contract. Allowing a third party to use the password or access the database can be deemed to be a violation of the contract.

**Slip Opinion:** A court decision available on looseleaf paper containing language of a law; the manner in which laws are first published. Subject to modification or correction, they are intended to serve as temporary publications and are replaced later with the official reporter version.

**SLA-DSOL:** Special Libraries Association Solo Librarians Division.

**SRLN:** SEE Self-Represented Litigation Network.

**Stakeholder:** A person or group that has an investment, share, or interest in something, as a business or industry.

**State Law Library:** A law library run by the state, often as part of the state’s judiciary. Some state law libraries are actually a department or division of the state library.

**State Library:** A library responsible for providing service to state officials, employees, government agencies, and the state’s residents. In some states, the state library doubles as the state law library by serving the state’s judiciary, prison inmates and the state’s legal professionals. Some state libraries are also responsible for the state-wide public, school or academic library network.

**Statutory Consolidation:** A merger in which a new corporate entity is created from two merging companies which cease to exist.

**Statutory Income:** Revenues established by law (i.e. a law stating that a $35.00 filing fee charged to all civil litigants filing a lawsuit in District Court goes to the public law library).

**Statutory Law:** The system of law and body of principles laid down in statutes, as distinct from the common law.

**Statutory Revision:** The process of reclassifying and rearranging the statutes in a more logical order, eliminating repealed, invalid, duplicative and other ineffective provisions.

**Subpoena:** A writ commanding a person to appear before a court, subject to penalty for failing to comply.

**Sunshine Law:** A statue requiring a governmental department or agency to open its meetings or its records to public review.

**SWALL:** Southwestern Association of Law Libraries.

**TEXJUR:** Texas Jurisprudence. Encyclopedia of Texas law.
**Treatise:** A scholarly book devoted to the treatment of a particular legal topic.

**Unlicensed Practice of Law:** Commonly referred to as UPL. The practice of law by a person, typically a non-lawyer, who has not been licensed or admitted to practice law in a given jurisdiction.

**Unofficial (law):** Statute or case law published by an unofficial publisher; SEE Authentic (law) and Authentication (law).

**UPL:** Common acronym often appearing in the professional literature, email mailing list, and internet websites for the phrase “unlicensed practice of law”.

**USC:** Abbreviation for United States Code. This is published by the Government Printing Office.

**USCA:** Abbreviation for United States Code Annotated. This is the Thomson-West version of the United States Code.

**USCS:** Abbreviation for United States Code Service. This is the annotated Lexis-Nexis version of the United States Code and a direct competitor to Thomson-West’s USCA.

**WESTPAC:** A package or bundle offered to law libraries by Thomson-West. It is an agreement that combines certain print and non-print subscriptions into a single contract (usually three years) with lower year-to-year increases.

**Wexis:** Refers to Westlaw and Lexis.

**Writ:** A court’s written order, in the name of a state or other authority, commanding the addresses to do or refrain from doing some specific act.

**Write for Order:** A procedure in which a title, new edition, or update is ordered upon patron request. The library’s write for policy could require a minimum number of requests or simply a single request.

**RESOURCES.**