

What Is...?

What is an Index?

“A detailed alphabetical list or table of topics, names of persons, places, etc., treated or mentioned in a book or series of books, pointing out their exact positions in the volume, usually by page number...but often by section, or entry, number.”¹

Basically, an index is a tool used to locate information. There are different types of indexes:

- Index in the back of a book (ex. encyclopedia)
- Newspaper Index (ex. New York Times Index)
- **Periodical Index** (ex. **Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature**)
- **Periodical Index “Subject”** (ex. **Library Literature**)

What is a Periodical Index?

“An index to one or more volumes of a periodical. A subject index to a group of periodicals; usually issued at short intervals and cumulated.”²

Library Literature, LISA, and ISTA are periodical indexes. Periodical indexes can come in a variety of forms such as print, online, or CD-ROM. When a periodical index is placed online, it's usually referred to as a *bibliographic database*.

What is a Bibliographic Database?

“A database containing records made up of Bibliographic information and designed to identify and locate relevant items.”³

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? Each of these records are made up of a number of fields, which contain very specific types of information. For example, the author field will only contain the name of the person who wrote the article. It will never contain the date of publication or the title of the article. Once you understand the relationship between the fields in a record and the options on the search screen, you will be able to create more efficient searches and find the articles that you need.

What is a Vendor?

“A company in the business of providing access to a selection of bibliographic databases, online or on CD-ROM, by subscription (*examples: EBSCO, ProQuest, Gale Group*, etc.) or on a per search basis (**OCLC *FirstSearch*** and **DIALOG**), usually under licensing agreement.”⁴

¹ Prytherch Ray, *Harrod's Librarians' Glossary and Reference Handbook* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 2000) 366.

² Prytherch 564.

³ Prytherch 68.

⁴ Reitz Joan, ODLIS: Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science (Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 2004) <<http://lu.com/odlis/about.cfm>>.