

Using Reference Sources

Reference Book: "1. A book designed by the arrangement and treatment of its subject matter to be consulted for definite items of information rather than to be read consecutively. 2. A book whose use is restricted to the library building."

Heartsill Young, ed. *ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1983), 188.

Use Reference books for:

- Finding background information
- Facts, statistics, definitions or specific details on a given subject
- As a tool to find other information sources; use bibliographies, reference lists and works cited at the ends of articles in encyclopedias as points for further research
- An overview of the subject.

Reference sources can be...

<p>General – sources provide information on the major aspects of any topic. Overview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encyclopedias</i> • <i>World Book Encyclopedia</i> • <i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i> • <i>Dictionaries</i> • <i>Webster's New World Dictionary</i> • <i>Random House Dictionary of the English Language</i> • <i>Almanacs & Yearbooks</i> • <i>The World Almanac and Book of Facts</i> • <i>Statistical Abstracts of the United States</i> 	<p>Subject Specific – provides general or in-depth information on a particular topic. Detailed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encyclopedias</i> • <i>Encyclopedia of Bioethics</i> • <i>Encyclopedia of African American Culture and History</i> • <i>Dictionaries</i> • <i>Cancer Dictionary</i> • <i>The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy</i> • <i>Handbooks, Guides, Manuals</i> • <i>Oxford Companion to American Literature</i> • <i>Harvard Guide to Women's Health</i>
---	---

<p>Direct – one stop to find information</p>	<p>Indirect – leads to another source for information.</p>
---	---

Organization of Reference Sources – Reference sources are typically organized in one of the following ways:

- Alphabetically
- Chronologically
- By subject

****Reference Sources** can be one volume or multi volumes. Always look up your subject in the index of the reference source. If the source is multi volumes, use the volume that contains the index for the entire set. Using the index ensures that you find all the information included in the source on your subject.