Finding and Using Reference Materials

Have you ever needed or wanted to know.....

- the population of some city or country?
- the definition or a term or phrase in an unfamiliar field?
- the maximum harbour draught of a port?
- all the chemical reactions of a particular chemical structure?
- a Shepard's Citation listing all the authorities citing a particular case, statute, or other legal authority?

What Is a Reference Collection?
A library’s Reference Collection is used to gather together in one convenient location standard references like encyclopedias, handbooks, and dictionaries that will provide answers to questions on any topic in any field of research. A Reference Collection can either be electronic or print.

- For electronic reference resources, refer to the JKW Library's directory Article Databases by Subject/Discipline, available on the JKW Library's homepage. Select the subject or discipline that represents the type or category of information you need, and in the resulting list of electronic resources/article databases, the reference sources for that subject/discipline will be designated with a yellow star ⭐.

- For hardcopy reference source refer to the JKW Library's ClipperCat, the library's online, publicly-accessible catalog.

Typical Reference Sources
Although there are many more types of sources in a Reference Collection than is practical to cover here, following are some of the most commonly collected types of reference books.

- Almanacs
- Atlases
- Bibliographies
- Biographies
- Dictionaries
- Directories
- Encyclopedias
- Gazetteers
- Handbooks
- Indexes
- Statistical Works
- Yearbooks

If you are looking for: Try searching for:

A biography of Elvis Presley
A biographical dictionary of contemporary musicians. Your subject keywords might be music and biography. Try variations on the words, such as musician or musicians and biographical or biographies.

The history of General Electric Company
An encyclopedia of company histories. Try searching by subject keyword for company and history and encyclopedia.

Demographic data for Charleston, South Carolina
A statistical source for the United States. You might try using united states and demographics as your starting subject keywords.

Recent developments in mainstreaming handicapped children
A handbook or manual that covers recent developments in education. Try searching the subject keywords education and handbook.

The definition of the musical term a capella
A dictionary of music. Try the subject keywords music and dictionary.

A date-by-date overview of American history for the year 1886
A chronology of American history. Try united states and chronology as your subject keywords.