

Definitions & Key Terms

Throughout your virtual field trip you may hear words you don't recognize. We try our best to explain the words we use, but there are terms we take for granted in our profession that can be confusing. Below you will find some helpful definitions to prepare you for your field trip.

Archive - The process of storing and preserving historic materials, a collection of documents or records, or the place these materials are stored.

[The captain's diary is stored in our transportation archives.](#)

Collection - A group of related objects, documents, or other materials that have cultural or historical significance.

[The Mercantile Library has a large collection of historic newspapers.](#)

Curator - A person responsible for preserving and growing a collection. They also make collections available to the public through exhibitions, lectures, and publications.

[The Curator of Art oversees the library's art collections.](#)

Digital Library - A searchable online database of digital objects that can include text, images, audio, and video.

[Selections from the Shopmaker American Political Collection can be viewed on our digital library.](#)

Digitize - To convert something, such as data or an image, to a digital format.

[We are currently digitizing this scrapbook.](#)

Exhibition - A display of artwork or other items of cultural or historical significance, often shown in art galleries and museums.

The library will present a special exhibition to celebrate their 175th anniversary.

Manuscript - A book, document, or piece of music written by hand **rather** than typed or printed.

Our oldest and rarest manuscripts are stored in our vault.

Mercantile - Relating to trade or commerce. The St. Louis Mercantile Library was founded 175 years ago by civic leaders and philanthropists. These businessmen were interested in trade and commerce and named the library to reflect that interest.

The St. Louis Mercantile Library preserves the history of trade and commerce in the United States with large collections of railroad and river-related materials.

Museum - An institution that collects, preserves, and exhibits cultural and historical materials.

The Mercantile library loans its collections to museums around the country for use in their exhibits.



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