Generally, a list of reference materials such as books and articles used for research, appearing at the end of scholarly work; more generally, an itemized collection of information resources on a specific topic published together as a book.

The study of books. It can be divided into enumerative (or systematic) bibliography, which results in an overview of publications in a particular category, and analytical (or critical) bibliography, which studies the production of books.


Bibliography as a practice has various definitions, and because collectors, scholars, publishers, curators, and librarians often use the word indiscriminately, it lacks precision. For this reason, bibliography generally attaches to itself qualifying adjectives like enumerative, systematic, analytical, critical, descriptive, historical, or textual.
- **Enumerative bibliography** (sometimes called *systematic* bibliography): the listing of books according to some system or reference plan, for example, by author, by subject, or by date. The implication often is that the listings will be short, usually providing only the author's name, the book's title, and date and place of publication, sometimes with evaluative annotation. Enumerative bibliography attempts to record and list summarized content and access information, rather than to describe minutely; little or no information is likely to be provided about *physical* aspects of the book such as paper, type, illustrations, or binding.

- **Analytical bibliography** (sometimes called *critical* bibliography): the study of books as physical objects; the details of their production; the effects of the method of manufacture on the text. Analytical bibliography may deal with the history of printers and booksellers, with the description of paper or bindings, or with textual matters arising during the progression from writer's manuscript to published book. Analytical bibliography may be further divided as follows:

  - **Historical bibliography**: the history of books broadly speaking, and of the persons, institutions, and machines producing them. Historical bibliography may range from technological history of bookmaking processes to the history of bookmaking as a humanistic art that provides evidence about culture and society.

  - **Textual bibliography** (sometimes called textual criticism): the relationship between the printed text as we have it before us, and that text as conceived by its author, as well as the states in between. Handwriting is often difficult to decipher; type-compositors make occasional mistakes, and proofreaders sometimes fail to catch them; but (especially in the period before about 1800) we often have only the printed book itself to tell us what the author intended. Textual bibliography tries to provide us with the most accurate text of a writer's work. The equipment of the textual bibliographer is both a profound knowledge of the work of the writer being edited (and of his or her period) and an equally profound knowledge of contemporary printing and publishing practices.

  - **Descriptive bibliography**: the close physical description of books. How is the book put together? What sort of type is used and what kind of paper? How are the illustrations incorporated into the book? How is it bound? Like the textual bibliographer, the descriptive bibliographer must have a good working knowledge of the state of the technology of the period in order to describe a book's physical appearance both accurately and economically. Descriptive bibliographies are books that give full physical descriptions of the books they list, enabling us to tell one edition from another and to identify significant variations within a single edition.