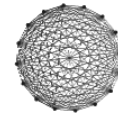


# *Undocumented Terms of Art*

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In many scholarly fields, there are certain terms of art that people use to describe their work. These terms are often unknown to people outside the discipline, and learning them is part of the ritual of joining the pursuit of whatever field it is, whether cultural studies or molecular biology. I have been exposed to far more of these terms than most, because I began my career as interdisciplinary scholar in a humanities/social science field, and became a science and technology journalist who has covered a number of unrelated specialties.

Here, in no particular order, are a list of undocumented terms of art that scholars use in their everyday practices but rarely in published literature.

In computer security, breaking into a machine is "popping a box."

In geology, a particular sequence of rocks is called a "package."

MRI experts call the magnet in their machines a "donut."

Biologists call microorganisms "bugs."

In genomics, an SNP is pronounced "snip."

Among web designers, URL is pronounced "earl."

At the synchrotron, you call the radiation beamline just "the beam."

Archaeologists call mass graves "death pits."

A dissertation is called a "diss."

Science fiction authors refer to scenes that will only appeal to regular readers of a particular series or genre as "fan service."

People who study blue-green algae (known as cyanobacteria) call it "cyano."

Dobsonian telescopes are called "Dobs," as in, "My Dobs is twenty inches!"

When you mess around with P-values in a paper, it's called "P hacking."

This list could go on indefinitely. Please add to it in your own mind, and tally up how many terms of art you use every day, but practically never write down.