Common Types of Searches

The following information is true in most cases in most databases you will encounter. Some databases offer other types of searches as well.

Keyword
- An uncontrolled vocabulary search
- Most dynamic type of search, because it searches in most of the fields in a book or periodical article catalog record
- Allows use of any word or words (except common stop words), phrases, names, places, etc.
- Will produce list of records related to the terms entered in the search -- usually about something or someone.
- Best search to perform when you need information about something.

Author
- Requires that you know what author you are looking for
- Must enter at least the last name of an author
  - If it is a common name like "Smith" you will also need to provide a first name and possibly even a middle initial/name if first name is also common, such as "John Smith."
- Searches the author fields in catalog records
- Produces list of books, articles, etc. by the author you searched
- Best search to perform when you know who the author is and need to see what is available by that author

Title
- Requires that you know the title or at least part of the title you are looking for
- May enter entire or partial title
- Searches the title fields in catalog records
- Produces list of books with titles exactly or at least similar to the terms you searched
- Best search to perform when you know the title of the item and need to see if it is available or what editions or formats are available for that title.

Subject
- A controlled vocabulary search
- Requires use of words, names, places that match subject terms established by the Library of Congress, also known as "subject headings."
- May enter all or part of a known subject heading
- Produces list of items about the subject you searched
- If search is on an author, list of items is produced both about them and by them
- Like the keyword search, is a search you can do when you need information about something or someone.