One Reasonable Explanation for the Terminology "Calling" a Function

In the 1960s when scientists at IBM were developing the Fortran programming language and using it to write programs for scientific problems, they often needed some mathematical function, e.g., a trig function such as sine. Since code for computing values of such functions (using infinite series) was nontrivial, a programmer would write it down and keep it in a notebook so he could look it up and copy it into a program when needed.

If some other programmer needed one of these functions, she might remember that Joe had the code in his notebook, and she would call out, "Hey Joe, I need your sine function!"

As this began to happen more and more frequently, creating more and more of a disturbance, these notebooks containing code for commonly used functions were placed in the company's library where programmers could get them and insert the code into their program.

Today, we still use this language of calling functions, and (as we'll see later) we can put them in a library from where they can be automatically retrieved and included in a program.