Distinguishing Scholarly from other Journals

locate, select, review...



Many types of periodical literature exist. Magazines, journals, and newspapers are all periodicals.

Journals and magazines are important sources for up-to-date information in all disciplines.

This guide will help you distinguish the different types of periodical sources.

What makes source... Scholarly ?

- A scholarly source is a publication, such as a journal, that includes papers and articles which document and discuss the results of original research. This is one of the primary methods used by researchers to communicate the results of their research in order to make such information available to the rest of the scholarly world.
- Articles are written by a scholar in the field or by someone who has done research in the field.
- The language used is often technical and discipline specific. They often contain many graphs and charts but few illustrated pages or pictures.
- Sources are documented in a bibliography and the credentials of the author(s) are given in the paper.
- The scholarly source publishes the research after it has gone through a process of review by a panel of experts in that specific field of study, and has fulfilled the requirements of a scholarly article.
- Many scholarly journals are published by a specific professional bodies or organisations.
- Scholarly journals are also called academic, peer-reviewed, or refereed journals.

Examples: : American Economic Review, Harvard Business Review, JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association, Journal of Marriage and the Family

What makes a source... Substantive ?

- Substantive sources include news & analysis or are magazines and periodicals or general interest.
- These publications are attractive in appearance and their articles are often heavily illustrated, including many photographs.
- Articles may be written by a member of the editorial staff, a scholar or a free lance writer.
- The language of these publications is plain and simple.
- They rarely cite sources or include bibliographies.
- They are generally published by commercial enterprises or individuals, although some come from specific professional organizations.
- The main purpose is to provide information to the general public of special interest or to the niche-market.

Examples: Economist, Business Week, National Geographic, Scientific American

What makes a source... Popular ?

- Popular magazines look slick and attractive in appearance. It is often illustrated with pictures and advertisements.
- It is one of the primary methods used to communicate information to the public.
- The language in the articles is usually simple without specialized terminology.
- The length of the articles is usually short and there is consequently little depth to the content.
- The articles rarely cite sources or have bibliographies. The articles contain information which has already appeared elsewhere. They do not contain original research.
- The main purpose of popular periodicals is to entertain the reader, to sell products (their own or their advertisers), and/or to promote a viewpoint. They present articles of popular interest on a variety of subjects.

Examples: Readers Digest, Sports Illustrated, Time, Vogue

What makes a publication... Trade ?

- Trade publications are periodicals focused on a particular industry (i.e. construction, hospitality industry, etc.) or a professional trade (HR managers, psychotherapists, etc.), so might not be of as much of interest to the general public.
- Articles in a trade publication are generally written by leading members of the field, along with consultants who provide cross-disciplinary advice when it is needed.
- The contents of a trade publication typically include breaking news about developments in the field, along with in-depth discussions of new practices and technology.
- They focus on a very narrow topic, such as supply chain management.
- They assume that readers are familiar with the terminology of a trade.
- They usually are affiliated with a trade organization or a professional organization that might publish its own journal.

Examples: Information Today, HR Magazine, Investment News, Oracle Magazine

Adapted by: Webster's Third International Dictionary

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