

Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Periodicals: How Do They Differ?

Periodicals (journals and magazines) are an important source for up-to-date information in all disciplines. But before using any of them it is essential to understand the level of scholarship that your chosen publication provides. Success of your paper may depend on your ability to distinguish between *scholarly (journals)* and *non-scholarly (magazines)* periodicals.

How Do They Differ?

There are three types of periodicals:

Scholarly

- Scholarly journal's cover and pages are usually plain in design. They do not have advertisements, but the text might be accompanied by graphs, tables and charts
- Journal title may include terms such as "journal," "review," or "bulletin"
- Authors always cite their sources using footnotes and/or a bibliography
- Articles are written by an expert in the field and usually reviewed by peers for accuracy prior to publication
- Scholarly journals tend to use specific terminology, required by the field of knowledge they represent. In order to fully understand the contents of a scholarly article, the reader should have a high level of education in the discipline
- The main purpose of scholarly journals is to publish reports on original research, to describe experiments involved in it, in order to make this information available to the scientists and academics interested in getting the latest and most accurate data in their field
- Articles may include these sections: *abstract, literature review, methodology, results, conclusion, and bibliography*
- Pages are consecutive throughout each volume
- Many scholarly journals are published by specific professional organizations
- Journals tend to be published less often, (monthly, quarterly, semi-annually)

Examples of Scholarly Journals:

- *JAMA: The Journal of American Medical Association*
- *Journal of Hydraulic Engineering*
- *Advances in Space Research*
- *Education & Urban Society*
- *Review of Human Factor Studies*

Popular

- Popular periodicals are slick and attractive in appearance, printed on glossy paper and accompanied with lots of photographs and eye-catching graphics

- Articles are not evaluated by experts in the field, but by editors on staff
- Authors are not always listed; credibility of information may not be substantiated
- These publications rarely, if ever, cite their sources. They publish second- or third-hand information, without clearly stating the primary source
- Articles use simple language without specific terminology and are intended for general audience. They are designed to entertain, promote a viewpoint, or sell a product
- Each issue starts with page 1
- Magazines tend to be published more often (monthly, weekly, daily), and may cover current and local events in a more timely manner

Examples of Popular Periodicals:

- *Reader's Digest*
- *Sports Illustrated*
- *Time*
- *Vogue*

Trade

- Commercial periodical targeted to the interests of a specific industry or profession
- Keeps professionals informed of what is happening in an industry
- Industry related news, product reviews, statistics, upcoming events
- Is published by a professional association
- Articles are reviewed by the employees of the publication
- References to sources might be included, but no abstracts
- Glossy color photographs (illustrations) and industry specific advertisements

Examples of Trade Publications:

- *American Builder*
- *American Libraries*
- *Food Technology*
- *Landscape Architecture*

In the Oregon Tech Library's electronic resources provided by **EBCSOHost**, there is an option to limit your search to scholarly (peer-reviewed) journals. By reading the description of a resource, you will learn its orientation: **Academic Search Premier** includes more journals, **MasterFILE Premier** has more popular magazines, **El Compendex Web** indexes scholarly sources.

More Information about this topic:

UC-Berkeley Library Tutorial (opens a 5-minute streaming video presentation):

<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/doemoff/tutorials/scholarlycontentonline.html>

University of Southern California Libraries "Popular, Scholarly, and Trade Communication" (part of the Research 101 tutorial; includes interactive exercises):

<http://www.usc.edu/libraries/research101/basics/basic02.html>