

Scholarly vs. Popular Periodicals

The term “**Periodical**” is used to refer to journal, magazine, or newspaper publications. The Connelly Library subscribes to over 1600 periodicals in paper format and nearly 4000 online.



Periodicals are useful for research because:

- They provide the most current information on a subject.
- They help identify very “new” or “hot” topics of interest that may not be found in books.
- The articles may be limited to a specific concept.
- Older issues may help to provide historical information on the topic.

University professors frequently want students to use only scholarly journal articles rather than articles from popular magazines.

Listed below are some characteristics that might help you decide whether an article is scholarly or popular. However, no exact rules can decide because many periodicals have both scholarly and popular elements; the student must ultimately learn the publications in a particular subject area and learn to make critical evaluations of each article.

SCHOLARLY

- Serious look, mostly text, often with many graphs and charts
- Few glossy pages or exciting pictures
- Always cites sources in footnotes or bibliographies
- Written by an expert in the field
- Language is that of the discipline covered
- Assumes the reader has a scholarly background
- Purpose is to report on original research to the rest of the scholarly world
- Peer reviewed
- Specific structure (abstract, methods, conclusion, etc.)

EXAMPLES:

American Economic Review
Harvard Business Review
New England Journal of Medicine
Modern Fiction Studies

POPULAR

- Lots of graphics (photos, drawings, etc.)
- Rarely, if ever, cite sources
- Often second or third hand information
- Usually very short articles, written in simple language for a minimal education level
- Generally little depth to the content
- Written like a story
- Main purpose is to entertain the reader and/or to promote a viewpoint

EXAMPLES :

Cosmopolitan
Ebony
Esquire
Readers Digest



Martha Tarlue, MLS
Connelly Library
La Salle University