



How Do I ... Distinguish Scholarly Journals¹

Types of Journals and Magazines

Journals and magazines are important sources for up-to-date information in all disciplines. Sometimes distinguishing the different types of journals included in the UC Library Collection can be challenging. For our purposes, we've divided the criteria for journal, or periodical, literature into four categories:

- Scholarly
- Substantive News/General Interest
- Popular
- Sensational

Journal Types Defined

Webster's *Third International Dictionary* offers the following definitions for our four journal types:

Scholarly:

- concerned with academic study, especially research,
- exhibiting the methods and attitudes of a scholar, and
- having the manner and appearance of a scholar

Substantive:

- having a solid base, being substantial

Popular:

- fit for, or reflecting the taste and intelligence of, the people at large

Sensational:

- arousing or intending to arouse strong curiosity, interest or reaction

Distinguishing Journal Type Guidelines

Keeping the above definitions in mind and realizing that the lines drawn between our four journal types are never totally clear-cut, these general criteria may be applied:

Scholarly, Academic or Peer Reviewed Journals

- Scholarly and academic are often used interchangeably
- Peer reviewed means that all research articles that appear in that publication are reviewed first by a group of qualified academics. Most, but not all, scholarly or academic publications are peer reviewed.
- Scholarly journals generally have a sober, serious look. They often contain many graphs and charts but few glossy pages or exciting pictures
- Scholarly journals always cite their sources in the form of footnotes or bibliographies

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- Articles are written by a scholar in the field or by someone who has done research in the field
- The language of scholarly journals is that of the discipline covered. It assumes some scholarly background on the part of the reader
- The main purpose of a scholarly journal is to report on original research or experimentation in order to make such information available to the rest of the scholarly world
- Many scholarly journals, though by no means all, are published by a specific professional organization

Examples of Scholarly Journals:

- *American Economic Review*
- *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*
- *JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association*
- *Modern Fiction Studies*
- *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*

Substantive News or General Interest Journals

- These periodicals may be quite attractive in appearance, although some are in newspaper format. Articles are often heavily illustrated, generally with photographs
- News and general interest periodicals sometimes cite sources, though more often do not
- Articles may be written by a member of the editorial staff, a scholar or a free lance writer
- The language of these publications is geared to any educated audience. There is no specialty assumed, only interest and a certain level of intelligence
- They are generally published by commercial enterprises or individuals, although some emanate from specific professional organizations
- The main purpose of periodicals in this category is to provide information, in a general manner, to a broad audience of concerned citizens

Examples of Substantive News or General Interest Journals:

- *Christian Science Monitor*
- *Economist*
- *National Geographic*
- *New York Times*
- *Scientific American*
- *Vital Speeches of the Day*

Popular Magazines

- Popular periodicals come in many formats, although often somewhat slick and attractive in appearance. Lots of graphics (photographs, drawings, etc.)
- These publications rarely, if ever, cite sources. Information published in such journals is often second or third hand and the original source is sometimes obscure
- Articles are usually very short, written in simple language and are designed to meet a minimal education level. There is generally little depth to the content of these articles



- 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

Examples of Popular Magazines:

- *Ebony*
- *Parents*
- *People Weekly*
- *Readers Digest*
- *Sports Illustrated*
- *Time*
- *Vogue*

Sensational Magazines

- Sensational periodicals come in a variety of styles, but often use a newspaper format
- Their language is elementary and occasionally inflammatory or sensational. They assume a certain gullibility in their audience
- The main purpose of sensational magazines seems to be to arouse curiosity and to cater to popular superstitions. They often do so with flashy headlines designed to astonish (e.g. Half-man Half-woman Makes Self Pregnant)

Examples of Sensational Magazines

- *Globe*
- *National Examiner*
- *Star*
- *Weekly World News*