

# Identifying Scholarly Journals

Researchers may choose or be required to limit their periodical sources to scholarly journals. But it is not always easy to identify a periodical as scholarly. The following general guidelines should address many of these concerns. However, students are advised to ask their professors about considerations specific to a particular discipline.

Scholarly journals differ from popular magazines in a variety of ways. Here are some of the distinguishing characteristics:

| Scholarly Journals  | Popular Magazines  |
|---|--|
| Contain more specialized subject matter   | Contain more general subject matter  |
| Articles include footnotes or endnotes and a list of references or works cited.   | Rarely include bibliographies or notes.  |
| Articles report on research   | Articles may be oriented toward general information or entertainment                     |
| Articles almost always will be "refereed" (reviewed by a group of scholars in the field prior to publication); the term "peer review" is also used. | No refereeing process  |
| Authors always identified; usually subject experts  | Authors may not be identified; generally reporters/journalists                           |
| Articles often use terminology specific to a particular discipline  | Articles use language suitable to a more general audience, of varying educational levels |
| Graphics generally used for purposes of illustration or to convey data  | Graphics and photos are common, used for impact and appeal as well as illustration       |
| Little or no advertising in most disciplines  | Advertising pervasive  |

These guidelines are a starting point for those browsing articles. Some of our database services, such as **ScholarSearch**, **Academic Search Premier** and **Proquest**, allow you to **limit your search to Academic/Scholarly journals** (click the tab/link for Academic/Scholarly Journals and/or choose the document type Scholarly Journals). Many of the subject indexes/databases that the library subscribes to cover primarily scholarly journals.

Looking at the **Guidelines for Authors** in the journal issues (or on the journal's website) is often a good way to determine whether a publication is scholarly, and further whether it is refereed/peer reviewed. However, if you are not sure, you can consult the Library's reference collection.

Students may want to confer with their professors about use of a particular source for a given assignment, and the reference staff is always glad to assist with questions about determining scholarly journal status.