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SAINT MARTIN'S UNIVERSITY

Identifying Scholarly Journals

College students are expected to read the research being done by scholars in their discipline and to apply it to their own projects. Scholarly journals offer the most current and comprehensive sources of such research. Indeed, many college research assignments specify that students limit their sources to scholarly journals. What distinguishes a scholarly journal from, for instance, a popular magazine? The table below explores the distinction.

	Scholarly Journals	Popular Magazines
Purpose:	To present original research significant to a specific academic field	To inform and entertain
Audience:	Scholars and students in the field who are familiar with the issues, methods and language of the field	The general public, who may have no previous knowledge of the topic
Authors:	Scholars, researchers, or other recognized experts in the field	Freelance or staff reporters—professional writers who are not usually experts on the article topic
Article Content and Style:	<p>Comprehensively addresses what is often a narrowly defined topic in the field</p> <p>Carefully documented with footnotes or parenthetical citations and concluding with an extensive bibliography</p> <p>Structure often standardized for the field and may include segments such as a literature review and a description of research methods</p> <p>Formal style with specialized jargon</p>	<p>Offers an overview of a current event or issue</p> <p>Sources rarely cited</p> <p>Frequently relies on a narrative or story-like organization</p> <p>Direct style and generalized vocabulary</p>
Overall Appearance:	Serious, with text, graphs, and tables, but few photographs or advertisements	Glossy and loaded with photographs and advertising
Publisher:	Professional association, university press, or commercial scholarly presses	Commercial publisher
Publication Decisions:	Acceptance for publication often based on peer-review, which means that members of an editorial board—scholars in the field—evaluate submissions for relevance, research quality and writing clarity	Articles assigned or selected by an editor
Examples:	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i> <i>Harvard Educational Review</i> <i>Journal of Heat Transfer</i> <i>Victorian Studies</i>	<i>Business Week</i> <i>PC Magazine</i> <i>Time</i> <i>Wired</i>

Finding Articles from Scholarly Journals

General Online Databases

The databases below index both popular magazines and scholarly journals; however, they do permit you to limit your search to scholarly journals.

Academic Search Premier: Click the “Peer Reviewed” box on the search form.

Research Library: Click the “Scholarly journals, including peer-reviewed” box.

Discipline-Specific Online Databases

The following databases index primarily scholarly journals and books. All offer an option to limit searches to journal articles.

Applied Science & Technology Index	Science, engineering, math, and technology
ATLA Religion	Religion and theology
Basic Biosis	Biology, biochemistry, botany, genetics, microbiology
Business Source Premier	Business
Criminal Justice Periodical Index	Criminal justice
ERIC	Education
MEDLINE	Medicine
MLA Bibliography	Literature, language, linguistics, and folklore
PsycINFO	Psychology

Other Resources

If you have a question about whether a journal is scholarly or peer-reviewed, you can also turn to the following resources:

The journal itself: The inside cover or first few pages of a scholarly journal often includes a description of the journal, which may state whether it is peer reviewed. If peer reviewed, it will likely also list the editorial board responsible for evaluating submissions.

Magazines for Libraries (SMC Reference Z 6941.K2 1995): This book provides brief descriptions for over 7000 periodical titles. A descriptive record says *Refereed* if a journal is peer-reviewed. It will also indicate whether the intended audience is an academic (*Ac.*) one.

Ulrichsweb.com (online from Research Tools page): Web version of *Ulrich's Periodicals Directory* offers detailed information on academic journals, popular magazines, trade publications, newsletters, and zines. Records indicate whether a journal is refereed (peer-reviewed).

Professors: They will be familiar with the most significant journals in their discipline.

Librarians: Always a good resource.