

Scholarly vs. Popular Periodicals



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Libraries contain two types of periodical publications: scholarly and popular. They are called "periodicals" because they are published at regular intervals throughout the year.

Journals are **scholarly** periodicals. They are collections of articles usually written by scholars in an academic or professional field.

Magazines are **popular** periodicals. They contain articles about different topics of popular interest and current events.

Use a journal to:

- ◆ perform scholarly research
- ◆ find out what has been studied on your topic
- ◆ find bibliographies that point to other relevant research

Use a magazine to find:

- ◆ information or opinions about popular culture
- ◆ up-to-date information about current events
- ◆ general articles for people who are not necessarily specialists on the topic

If your professor tells you to find **scholarly** information for your paper, you should choose a journal rather than a popular magazine. Some magazines, such as *Harpers*, *Scientific American*, and *The New Republic*, can also be good sources of information for your paper. They include in-depth articles that are geared toward readers who, though not experts in the field, are knowledgeable about the issues discussed. Popular magazines like *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Rolling Stone* are probably not the best sources to use for your paper.

The following list can help you distinguish between scholarly and popular publications.

| | Scholarly (Journal) | Popular (Magazine) |
|-------------|--|--|
| Cover | Not distinctive and usually has no artwork or photography | Usually in color, may feature a person in the news |
| Articles | <p>Most are research-oriented, technical, or scholarly in content</p> <p>Often begin with an abstract</p> <p>May have charts or graphs but not often photographs</p> <p>Author identified by degree and position</p> <p>Conclude with a bibliography of sources used</p> | <p>Most cover popular, current, or general interest topics</p> <p>May include illustrations and photographs</p> <p>Author not always identified</p> <p>Rarely include references</p> |
| Advertising | Almost none | A great deal |
| Publishers | Usually academic or professional organizations | Commercial |
| Audience | Professionals/scholars in the field | General public |
| Examples | <p><i>New England Journal of Medicine</i></p> <p><i>Educational Technology Review</i></p> <p><i>Journal of Physical Chemistry</i></p> <p><i>American Historical Review</i></p> | <p><i>Time</i></p> <p><i>Newsweek</i></p> <p><i>Sports Illustrated</i></p> <p><i>People</i></p> |