

Cerritos College Library

In the Wilford Michael Library & Learning Resource Center

Scholarly Journals vs. Popular Magazines

Periodicals, which include journals, magazines, and newspapers, are published regularly (i.e. daily, weekly, monthly, annually, etc.) and are important sources for up-to-date information. The most common kinds of periodicals are scholarly, popular, and trade magazines. When doing research, it is useful to know what these different publications are and what kind of information they contain.

What is a Scholarly Journal?

Scholarly journals are generally published by and for experts. A publication is considered to be **peer reviewed** if its articles go through an official editorial process that involves review and approval by the author's peers (people who are experts in the same subject area.) Articles in scholarly journals present new, previously unpublished research. Scholarly sources will almost always include:

- Bibliography and footnotes
- Author's name and academic credentials

Use scholarly journals for highly focused original research. **JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association**, **African American Review**, **Modern Fiction Studies**, **American Psychologist** and **American Sociological Review** are examples of scholarly journals.

What is a Popular Magazine?

Popular magazines range from highly respected publications such as **Scientific American** and **The Atlantic Monthly** to general interest magazines like **People**, **Sports Illustrated** and **Newsweek** and **US News & World Report**. Articles in popular magazines tend to be written by staff writers or freelance journalists and are geared towards a general audience. While most magazines adhere to editorial standards, articles do not go through a peer review process and rarely contain bibliographic citations. Popular magazines are periodicals that one typically finds at grocery stores, airport newsstands, or bookstores. Use popular magazines for a general overview of current news and opinions, or firsthand accounts of an event.

What is a Trade Publication?

Trade publications focus on a specific profession or trade. Articles in trade magazines cover the interest of skilled laborers, technicians, and artisans. Professional magazines cover the interests of professors, librarians, and members of other fields that require advanced degrees. Subject magazines cover a topic of interest to one or more professions. Use trade magazines for overviews of news and research in a particular field. **Legal Assistant Today** and **Library Journal** are examples of trade magazines.

How Do I Know Which Magazine to Use?

There are reference books which describe and evaluate periodicals. If you need further information about a title, consult **Magazines for Libraries**, available at the Reference Desk (Ref Desk Z6941 .M23) or ask a librarian.

SCHOLARLY JOURNALS VS. POPULAR MAGAZINES

How Can I Tell the Difference Between Magazines and Journals?

	SCHOLARLY JOURNALS	POPULAR MAGAZINES	TRADE PUBLICATIONS
APPEARANCE	Print: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain cover • Plain paper • Black/white graphics and illustrations • No pictures • Pages are consecutive throughout the volume Web site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • utilitarian 	Print: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eye-catching cover • Glossy paper • Color pictures and illustrations • Each issue starts with page 1 Web site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “flashy” 	Print: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover depicts industrial setting • Glossy pictures and illustrations • Each issue starts with page 1 Web site: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • varies from flashy to utilitarian
AUDIENCE	Scholars, researchers, students	General public	People in the business or industry
CONTENT	News and research (methodology, theory) from the field	Current events, personalities, and general interest articles	Industry trends, new products or techniques, and organizational news
STYLE	Written for experts using technical language	Journalistic; written for nonprofessional or layperson.	Written for people in the business or industry using technical language
AUTHOR	Experts, scholars	Journalists, staff	Practitioners, staff
ACCOUNTABILITY	Peer reviewed, refereed	Editorial review	Editorial review
	Always bibliographies	No bibliographies	May have short bibliographies
ADS	Few or none	Many, often in color	Some, often in color
FREQUENCY	Usually monthly or quarterly	Usually weekly or monthly	Usually weekly or monthly
EXAMPLES	<i>American Journal of Nursing</i> <i>Journal of Social Issues</i>	<i>Rolling Stone</i> <i>Newsweek</i>	<i>American Libraries</i> <i>Chronicles of Higher Education</i>

Helpful Videos

Magazines vs. Popular Magazines

Peabody Library: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeyR30Yq1tA&feature=related>

Lynn Library: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6_U9VUHgyQ