



## Distinguishing Scholarly from Non-Scholarly Periodicals


Journals and magazines are important sources for up-to-date information in all disciplines. With a large periodical collection it is often difficult to distinguish between the various levels of scholarship found in the collection. The criteria for periodical literature have been divided into four categories:


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


### Scholarly Interest


 Scholarly journals 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.

 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 a scholarly journal is to report on original research or experimentation, in order to make such information available to the rest of the scholarly community.


 Many are published by a specific professional organization.


#### EXAMPLES OF SCHOLARLY JOURNALS


*American Economic Review*  
*American Journal of Nursing*  
*Cancer Nursing*  
*Early Childhood Research Quarterly*  
*Journal of Education Finance*  
*Journal of Educational Research*


### Substantive News or General Interest


 These periodicals may be quite attractive in appearance, although some 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.

 The main purpose of periodicals in this category is to provide information, in a general manner, to a broad audience of concerned citizens.

 These are generally published by commercial enterprises or individuals, though some emanate from specific professional organizations.

#### EXAMPLES OF SUBSTANTIVE NEWS OR GENERAL INTEREST PERIODICALS

*Discover*  
*Economist*  
*National Geographic*  
*New York Times*  
*Scientific American*  
*Wall Street Journal*



## Popular

Popular periodicals come in many formats, although they are often somewhat slick 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 educational level. There is generally little depth to the contents of these articles.

Articles written by staff members or free lance writers.

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 PERIODICALS

*Parents*  
*Readers' Digest*  
*Time*  
*Vogue*

## Sensational

Sensational periodicals come in a variety of styles, but they most often use a newspaper format, with many graphics.

Their language is elementary and occasionally inflammatory or sensational. They assume a certain gullibility in their readers.

Arousing curiosity, catering to popular superstitions and celebrity "news" seems to be the main purpose of sensational periodicals. They often do so with flashy headlines designed to astonish (e.g., "Half-man Half-woman Makes Self Pregnant").

EXAMPLES OF SENSATIONAL PERIODICALS

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