

## Distinguishing Between Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Periodicals

How can you tell the difference between Scholarly and Non-Scholarly journals? Try to answer the following questions:

- 1. What is the main purpose of the periodical?**
  - If it reports on original research or experimentation, it is considered a scholarly publication.
  - If its primary focus is to entertain, to sell a product, or to promote a point of view, it is considered non-scholarly.
- 2. Are sources cited in footnotes or bibliographies?**
  - If the answer is yes, it is probably a scholarly journal since they **always** cite their sources.
- 3. How does it look?**
  - Scholarly publications usually have a serious appearance, often supplemented by graphs and charts, with few photographs and fewer colorful advertisements.
  - Non-scholarly periodicals often have many illustrations, including photographs, and contain numerous ads.
- 4. Who wrote the article?**
  - Scholars or researchers in a particular field write the articles found in scholarly publications.
  - Staff writers, free-lance writers, and professional journalists write most articles found in popular magazines.
- 5. What is the language of the journal?**
  - Does the journal employ a specialized vocabulary? Does it assume the reader has a thorough awareness of the history and issues of the journal subject? If the answer is "yes," the journal is scholarly in nature.
  - Non-scholarly periodicals such as Newsweek appeal to the "layperson." Language is simple and conversational and unknown terms are usually defined.
- 6. Who published the journal?**
  - Many scholarly journals are published by professional organizations.
  - A commercial publisher usually issues popular periodicals.
- 7. Pagination:**
  - Many scholarly journals use continuous pagination. This means that issue number one in a volume will have pages 1-100, and issue two will have 101-200, and so forth. This requires you to cite the item differently than if page numbers begin anew with each issue.
  - Popular magazines begin page numbering anew with each issue and require a different citation format than either a journal with continuous or individual pagination.

### What are Some Examples of Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Periodicals?

#### Scholarly periodicals:

- *Science*
- *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*

#### Non-scholarly periodicals:

- *Time*
- *Sports Illustrated*

# A Comparison of Scholarly and Non-Scholarly Periodical Elements

Do you know what it means when a professor's assignment requires that you use a scholarly or professional journal for your information sources? This guide lists some comparative criteria that will help you determine if the journal you are using meets your assignment's requirements. This comparison isn't about the accuracy of the popular magazines' information; it has to do with the level of scholarly information that is made available.

Most, if not all, of these criteria can be determined by looking at the articles.

Element	Scholarly journal/periodical publication	Non-scholarly/Popular publication
<b>Purpose</b>	To share with other scholars the results of primary research & experiments.	To entertain or inform in a broad, general sense.
<b>Author</b>	A respected scholar or researcher in the field; an expert in the topic; names are always noted.	A journalist or feature writer; names not always noted.
<b>Publisher</b>	A professional association; a university or known scholarly publisher.	A commercial publisher.
<b>Publication acceptance</b>	Experts (peers) in the field (or an outside editorial board) review each article submission before publication acceptance; author names are hidden from the reviewer in "blind reviews."	Writers are often employed by the magazine or publisher; acceptance is based largely on the topic's consumer appeal.
<b>Intended Audience</b>	Other scholars or researchers in the field, or those interested in the topic at a research level.	General public.
<b>Content</b>	Formal presentation of scholarly work in a standard style; often an abstract at the beginning of the article. Articles also have specific section headings, such as literature review, methodology, results, conclusion, and discussion/further study.	Often presented in story format, with anecdotes from other people.
<b>Style</b>	Language is very formal and technical; usually contains discipline-specific jargon.	Language is casual (high school reading level or lower). Few, if any, technical terms are used (and if they are, they are usually defined).
<b>Appearance</b>	Very basic layout, usually simple black text on white paper; tables or charts to illustrate research components; few, if any, pictures; any advertising is minimal and subject-related, aimed at the academic or research community.	Often printed on glossy paper with colored text or headlines; usually accompanying photographs and graphics; many advertisements for a wide variety of general consumer products.
<b>References</b>	Standard elements; references are always cited and expected; can be called "works cited" or "bibliographies;" text often contains footnotes.	Very uncommon; text may contain vague referrals to "a study published at..." or "researchers have found that..." with no other details about that information.
<b>Examples</b>	Journal of Educational Psychology; Harvard Theological Review	Newsweek; Rolling Stone; Field & Stream

**Magazines for Libraries** (Hauenstein Library Reference Z 6941 .M23) provides in-depth information about 6000+ periodicals. Ask a librarian if you need more help.

From the Valparaiso University Moellering Library web site at [www.valpo.edu/library/user/scholarly.html](http://www.valpo.edu/library/user/scholarly.html)