Scholarly vs. Popular Articles

Research projects often have specific instructions about the types of resources you can use to complete your assignment. One of the more common specifications is requires you include scholarly resources. Knowing what types of resources can make it much easier to complete your assignment because you already have a starting point! However, sometimes, it can be confusing to remember the difference between all of the types of information available!

What is a scholarly article?
A scholarly article is written by an expert in their field, and is an excellent resource to find out what has been studied or researched about a particular topic. Additionally, look at the bibliography for a are great resources for finding additional sources.

Are "scholarly" and "peer reviewed" the same?
Sometimes! "Peer reviewed" means that the article and research was reviewed and evaluated by other experts in the field before it can be accepted for publication. Some publications require this, but others do not. Many use the terms "scholarly" and "peer reviewed" interchangeably. "Academic journal articles" and "research journal artlces" are some additional terms you may encounter. Rest assured; in the majority of cases you can use any scholarly or peer reviewed articles for your research. If you have concerns, double check with your instructor if you have any questions about the requirements for your resources.

How can I tell the difference between scholarly, trade and popular articles?
We've created a chart for you to outline the typically criteria for each of the most common types of journal articles you'll run into. Unfortunately, some journals may not meet all of the criteria and will seem to fit it multiple categories. If that happens, it's best to check with your instructor or librarian to determine what type of article it is!

How can I find scholarly resources?
The CCCOnline Library has a variety of multidisciplinary and subject-specific research databases available to you from Gale, EBSCO, and Anthropology Online. To access these databases, please login to D2L/Brightspace, and look at the right sidebar.

More information:
Here are some great resources on Scholarly vs. Popular articles:
Scholarly vs. Popular Video by MCCinfolit
Scholarly vs. Popular Peridoicals Tutorial by Peabody Library, Vanderbuilt University
Teach Yourself: Understanding Scholarly Sources by NCSU

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Criteria	Popular	Trade	Scholarly
Accountability	Editor	Editor	Peer reviewed or refereed[1]
Advertisements	Heavy	Some, but usually related to the trade or topic the journal is designed for	Very few, if any
Appearance	Glossy pages, numerous photographs and graphics, bright colors	May have glossy pages, photographs, graphics, charts or graphs, but used to support or enhance the article	Charts, graphs and other images are used to support or enhance the article
Audience	General public, entertainment-seekers	Professionals in the field	Professionals or researchers in the field
Authors	Publication staff members	Publication staff members and contributing authors (professionals in the field)	Contributing authors (experts or professionals in the field)
Citations	Rarely include references for source of information	May include references for sources	Complete references included
Language	Simple language designed to meet average reading level	May use trade jargon, written in a professional manor	Extremely formal, high-level; assumed reader is of a similar scholarly background
Purpose	To entertain or provide information about a special interest topic	To inform on trends, new ideas, professional advice	To disseminate research study results, to inform

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[1] Peer review is the process by which scholarly work is checked by a group of experts in that field to ensure the work meets standards before publication.