What is a Scholarly Journal

Most instructors at the college level require that you include scholarly journals when you write a research paper, but how can you tell what is scholarly and what isn’t?

Is “Scholarly and “Peer Reviewed” the same thing?

Yes, most of the time. Scholarly journals are sometimes referred to as “Refereed” or “Peer Reviewed.” These are scholarly journals that have a rigorous approval and editing process in which experts in the field evaluate journal articles before acceptance for publication. Many scholarly journals are refereed or peer reviewed, but not all. If you know your journal is already refereed or peer reviewed, then it is a scholarly journal.

How can I determine if my periodical is scholarly?

1. Check the Ads. Most scholarly, peer reviewed items will have very few ads and the ones contained will deal with the academic discipline.
2. Appearance. Articles generally structured and may include these sections: abstract, literature review, methodology, results, conclusion, bibliography. Quite often if “Journal of” appears in the title, it is a scholarly publication.
3. Check these Reference Books:
   - Ulrich’s International Periodicals Directory
     Call number: Z6941 U5 (Reference)
     This 5-volume set is kept in the Reference Collection. Entries list basic information about the periodical, including the Document Type. Look for document types that are “academic/scholarly publications.” The designation Refereed Serial will appear in entries for titles that are peer reviewed. Vol. 5 contains an alphabetical list of Refereed Periodicals.
   - Magazines for Libraries
     Call number: Z6941 M23 (Reference)
     This volume is located in the Reference Collection and lists basic information similar to Ulrich’s. Entrees that are peer reviewed contain the designation “Refereed.”
4. Ask a Reference Librarian:
   If you still have questions please come to the Reference Desk on the 1st floor of the library and talk to a reference librarian. Bring your periodical or article with you and we’ll help you determine whether or not it’s scholarly.
Tips for Electronic Full-Text Database Articles

You may be getting many of the articles you are using from some of the library’s full-text databases (such as Academic Search Complete). How can you tell if your article is scholarly or not? You can still use steps 2, 3, and 4 above, but also keep the following in mind:

1. Who is the author?

Is there an author listed? If not, chances are it’s not a scholarly article. Most electronic full-text databases will include brief biographical information about the author. If the author is an academic researcher or professor, the article is often considered scholarly.

2. What is the name of the publication?

Most publications that include the word Journal tend to be scholarly. For others, it can be difficult to tell.

3. Does this article have a bibliography, reference list, or footnotes?

This is the most important criterion for determining whether or not your article is scholarly. Check the article; if it has bibliography or footnotes, it is fairly lengthy, and if the author is some sort of researcher or professional, then this is probably a scholarly article.

What is a Scholarly Book

Most instructors would prefer you use scholarly books when conducting research. Unlike databases which have a feature that allows you to limit your search to scholarly or peer reviewed articles, library book catalogs do not have such a feature. To determine if a book is scholarly, you will need to look at certain features of the book.

1. Is the book from the General, Reference, Folio or Special Collections?

Books from these collections are intended for academic and adult audiences. Books from the Juvenile Collection are for intended for children and are not accepted by college instructors as academic research. Juvenile books at UNCP will have a Dewey Decimal call number (812.52 J76), not a Library of Congress number (PS3565.J65 B3).

2. Is the book a non-fiction item?

Fiction items should not be used for anything but literary research.

3. Who is the publisher?

Scholarly books tend to come from University Presses and specialized publishers. Examine a publisher’s website and their Mission Statement or About to learn what types of materials is published.

4. Who is the author?

Most academic books will be written or edited by an authority in the field. Check to see if the author’s credentials are listed. There may even be an about the author page. You can also conduct a web search to discover more about the author and determine what organizations he/she is associated with. Does the author belong to associations or societies within the field?

Some academic books will be compilations by various authors who are authorities in the field. These books will list the author’s credentials either in an About the Authors page or before their selection begins.
5. **Does the book or chapters have a bibliography, reference list or footnotes?**
Just scholarly articles, a lengthy bibliography or footnotes provides evidence that the author is researcher or professional in the field.

6. **Is the content academic?**
Does the content the result of research and not a personal bias? Is the language appropriate for the audience and content? If the language is too simplified, the intended audience may be the general public and not academic researchers.

7. **Does the author provide in-depth details about research or topic?**
Academic works are the results of research, both original research where the author will present new data on an event and comparisons to other research or studies conducted in that field. An author may comment, critique or evaluate on the previous research as well as compare it his/her own. Data may be presented in the form of charts and graphs.
# Distinguishing Scholarly Journals from Other Periodicals

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appearance</strong></td>
<td>- Serious Format</td>
<td>- Glossy</td>
<td>- Aesthetically appealing</td>
<td>- Aesthetically appealing</td>
<td>- Cheap feel</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Plain cover, plain paper</td>
<td>- Lots of illustrations</td>
<td>- Glossy pages</td>
<td>- Glossy pages</td>
<td>- Newspaper format</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Articles are generally structured and may include these sections: abstract, literature review, methodology, results, conclusion, bibliography. Quite often if Journal appears in the title, it is a scholarly publication</td>
<td>- Appealing to the eye</td>
<td>- Short articles with little depth</td>
<td>- Short articles with little depth</td>
<td>- Outrageous headlines</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Usually appears on the newsstands</td>
<td>- Usually appears on the newsstands</td>
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<td><strong>Graphics</strong></td>
<td>- Charts and graphs may be included</td>
<td>- Usually color</td>
<td>- Lots of photographs, illustrations, and graphics</td>
<td>- Sensational or dramatic photographs</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Few photographs</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Usually in color</td>
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<td>- Little color, mostly black and white</td>
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<td><strong>Advertising</strong></td>
<td>- Very little, what advertising there is generally pertains to the discipline</td>
<td>- Advertising is aimed at users familiar with the industry</td>
<td>- Does contain advertising</td>
<td>- Extensive advertising</td>
<td>- Advertising designed to be as shocking or dramatic as the stories</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td>- Professionals and researchers</td>
<td>- Geared for the specific business, industry, or organization</td>
<td>- Caters to a varied audience</td>
<td>- Non-professionals</td>
<td>Readers who are very impressionable</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Authors</strong></td>
<td>Scholars and researchers in the discipline</td>
<td>- Staff or freelance writers</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>- Technical</td>
<td>- Geared for that particular industry</td>
<td>- Geared for educated readership</td>
<td>- Designed to meet a minimal education level</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Geared for those knowledgeable in the field</td>
<td>- Assumes some expertise in the field</td>
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<td>- Simple and easy to read</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>- Inform, report, and make research available for the rest of the community</td>
<td>- To provide news and information for that specific industry</td>
<td>- To provide information for the layman</td>
<td>- To entertain or persuade</td>
<td>- Arouse curiosity by stretching or twisting the truth</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Provide information for the layman</td>
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<td>- Design to sell products or services</td>
<td>- seeks sales based sensationalism</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sources</strong></td>
<td>- Cite sources with footnotes or bibliographies</td>
<td>- Some citations</td>
<td>- Occasionally cites sources</td>
<td>- Sources rarely cited</td>
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*Updated 10/2014 RJA*