Identifying and locating scholarly information

Why is it important to use scholarly information in the research paper?

- Using scholarly information will improve the quality of your research paper, in keeping with the academic advancement you pursue.
- Knowledge gained through quality information will result in a better understanding of the subject, helping become good scholars and researchers.

What are scholarly publications?

- A publication is considered scholarly if the articles are authored by subject experts for a target audience that is mainly academic, and published by a recognized society with academic goals and missions.
- These publications would normally contain original research or reports on original research, leading readers into further development of the topic/subject.

What are peer-reviewed publications?

- A publication is known as peer-reviewed (or refereed) if a subject expert affiliated with an academic institution or professional organization has reviewed the articles for accuracy, validity and clarity of the information presented before approving them for publication in a scholarly journal.
- This process is moderated by the journal editorial staff to ensure the quality of work submitted for publication.
- Each article submitted for publication is carefully critiqued and judged on multiple criteria including credibility, reliability and relevance to the field of knowledge in a particular subject area.

What is the difference between scholarly and peer-reviewed publications?

- All peer-reviewed journals will fall under the “scholarly” category.
- However, all scholarly publications may not be peer-reviewed. Only those that go through the review process are considered peer-reviewed.
- Some professional journal fall under Trade Publications. These may or may not be peer-reviewed.

How would I recognize a scholarly publication?

- Content will relate to research projects, methodology and theory
- The articles will:
  - be lengthy
  - have structured sections, abstract as well as results
  - cite every piece of information
  - have a bibliography at the end of the article
  - will not contain glossy images or photographs, except when relevant to the study
  - contain statistical data, and/or graphs and charts
  - show author affiliation and contact information
  - may show the number of times the article has been cited (used) by others

Is it safe to assume that any periodical title with the word “journal” is scholarly in nature?

- A publication may be classified a “journal” based upon the nature of information it offers.
- The word “Journal” appearing in the title does not always imply that the publication is of scholarly nature. For example, Wall Street Journal is a newspaper; not a scholarly publication.
What are trade publications? Can these be used in the place of a scholarly journal?

- Trade publications contain practical information on a specific industry or profession.
- Target audience is members of specific profession, industry or business.
- Some trade publications ARE peer-reviewed. Information here is usually considered reliable. The nature of writing will be technical and may or may not be viewed as academic in nature.

Is there way to locate scholarly journals in the library databases?

- Library databases have a convenient feature to limit a search to only scholarly articles.
- Depending upon the database design, these may fall under any one of the following categories:
  - Scholarly
  - Peer-reviewed
  - Refereed
  - Academic

So, where would I look for these options?

- Look for these options in all the search screens in a library database: Basic/Keyword, Subject or Advanced Search.
- When not visible, click More Options to bring make this appear.

When I forget to choose this option, is there a way to recognize this category from the results list?

- Sure, databases offer filter options at the results screen. Look for Refine Search near the search box, and Content/Source Type links on either side of the results display.

Is it safe to assume that using the limit option will give me information of a higher quality?

- Not all the time. Using these limit options in the database is an easier to filter information from scholarly journals according to the database used.
- You will have to check further if the articles fit five or more of the following categories:
  - long with structured sections, abstract as well as results
  - in-text citations shown appropriately
  - contains a bibliography
  - contains statistical data, and/or graphs and charts
  - shows author affiliation and contact information
  - no images or photographs, except when relevant to the study
  - indicates the number of times the article has been cited (used) by other scholars
  - ensure that the nature of information is consistent with the other pieces of information collected.
- Book reviews, editorials and similar articles are NOT acceptable materials for use in academic research papers, even when obtained from scholarly/peer-reviewed publications.

I notice that the same title is listed as scholarly journal in one database, and magazine in another? Why is this discrepancy?

- Assigning categories is all up to the indexing staff of the database vendors.
- As far as your research is concerned, you need not worry about this conflicting information. Just go with what the database indicates.
- Remember to go over the “recognizing scholarly articles” categories listed above.