



**WESTMINSTER**

Giovale Library

## Scholarly vs. Popular Sources

**Periodicals (magazines or journals)** can be **scholarly** or **popular**. Depending on your topic, you may need only scholarly sources, only popular sources, or a combination of the two. Whatever your topic, it's important to be able to tell the difference between these publication types.

### **You know it is a scholarly source when:**

- The purpose is to share research
- It has detailed articles aimed at a specific audience (such as historians or scientists)
- It is written with a neutral, unbiased approach
- It uses specialized lingo specific to its area of research

### **Scholarly sources are:**

- Usually available only in libraries or by subscription
- Often peer-reviewed

### **Scholarly Publications...**

- will usually have words like “journal” or “quarterly” in the title.
- will have a simple cover that usually has the name of a professional or academic association on the front.
- will have an abstract at the beginning. An abstract summarizes the article so you can get an idea of what it's about and whether or not it's appropriate for your topic.
- will have a form of citation such as footnotes or endnotes. These citations should be accompanied by a works cited or bibliography page. This page can be a great resource to help you find other sources about your topic!

### **You know it is a popular source when:**

- Its purpose is to entertain or inform
- It has short, easy-to-read articles aimed at the general public
- It is written through one viewpoint—it's not neutral
- There are no (or very few) cited sources or specialized lingo

### **Popular Sources are:**

- Found in a grocery store or newsstand
- Not peer-reviewed

### **Popular Publications...**

- usually have flashy and colorful covers, often with photographs.
- are often accompanied by photographs and do not contain citations.
- usually contains lots of advertisements.

As with everything, there are exceptions to these guidelines, so it's important that you look beyond the cover to the content! If you have more questions about scholarly versus popular sources, please feel free to ask a librarian!